

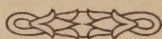


ARCHIE'S CHANCES

A TALE
BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE SPANISH BROTHERS"
&c.

*Silloth Wesleyan
Sunday School.*



Awarded to :

Mary J. Foggale.....
for attendance,
& Conduct.....

J. SUTTON, Superintendant,

XMAS, 1909.



ARCHIE IN PERPLEXITY.

ARCHIE'S CHANCES.



ARLETTE'S GRIEF.

Page 117.

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS

London, Edinburgh, and New York.

ARCHIE'S CHANCES

AND

The Child's Victory.

By the Author of

"THE SPANISH BROTHERS."

&c. &c.



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ARCHIE'S CHANCES.

I.

A CHANCE WANTED.

"You know, Kate, I have never yet had a chance." The speaker was a lank, overgrown stripling, at the awkward age between boy and man. He stood leaning against the window-sill,—one thin, bony hand thrust through his disordered hair, the other holding carelessly an open book.

A pretty, pleasant-looking girl, with just the likeness to her brother that a figure perfectly carved in ivory might bear to one rough-hewn in granite, raised her eyes from some fine sewing. "Why, Archie, what makes you say that just now?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing,—only something I read here;" and he pushed the book towards her.

She shook her head. "I have no time for reading Tennyson, or anything else just now."

"Wish *I* had no time!" returned Archie, yawning drearily. Then he murmured, half to himself,—

" 'When every day brought forth a noble chance,
And every chance brought forth a noble knight.' "

Wish I had lived then!"

Kate's busy fingers paused an instant, while she looked rather anxiously in her brother's face.

"It does not depend on chance," she said. "One can always *be* what is right and best."

"It does though," Archie answered a little roughly. "Where's the chance for a fellow to be anything if he can't get a chance?" Then, conscious of having expressed himself with even more than his usual awkwardness, he tried to explain—"If one can get nothing to do, one can't do it. I mean one *must* do it. And it's just the hardest work in the whole world."

He took up his book again, and Kate resumed her sewing, about which she was

anxious, as the light was beginning to wane. During the interval of silence that followed, it may briefly be explained that Archer Edward Lyndon and his sister Kate Lyndon were orphans, residing at present with their mother's sister and her husband. Their father, a country gentleman of good family, had contrived, in a few years of extravagant living, to cast away his children's bread, as well as his own health and peace of mind. It had been one of his early imprudences to "marry beneath him,"—very much beneath him in the estimation of the world; and during his lifetime no intercourse was kept up with the family of his wife, who died two or three years before him. Yet it was the sister of his wife who sought out his desolate children, and took them from the cold, stately, miserable house where bailiffs were guarding the furniture for the creditors of their dead father, to a comfortable though comparatively humble home.

Robert Morris, a prosperous draper and silk mercer in the rising country town of Middlesbury, was quite willing to act the good Samaritan to the young relatives of

his wife. "Let us keep the girl by all means, if nothing better should offer for her," he said. "She's a good little thing, and a bonny. I see you love her already, and indeed so do I. She'll be no burden—not she. But the boy! His father's people must do something for the boy."

This was reasonable; and Morris wrote to various members of the late Archer Lyndon's family, urging the claims of his orphan boy. His letters were duly answered; and all his correspondents were of opinion that "something should be done for Archer's boy." Indeed, some went further, and intimated that they "would do something for Archer's boy," would "look after him," would "see to him," would "take the earliest opportunity of advancing his interests." One of Mr. Lyndon's cousins, a clergyman with a good living, but also with a large family, enclosed a cheque for fifty pounds, adding an expression of regret that, having sons of his own to provide for, he could not undertake any responsibility with regard to the orphan.

Referring afterwards to this transaction, Morris observed dryly that Mr. Ruther-

ford's cheque was the only Lyndon money *he* ever saw the colour of; and that a promise to pay the bearer on demand was the best kind of promise, since at least one knew how much it stood for.

Perhaps, however, the luckless Archie might not have been entirely forgotten by his kindred, had not a malignant fever brought him to the verge of the grave, and been followed by relapse after relapse, changing the once active, healthy boy, into a nerveless, attenuated stripling. His aunt, who, with Kate's loving and efficient help, had tended him assiduously, told him he ought to be very thankful his life was spared at all. He made no response: like most boys, he was extremely reticent where feeling was concerned; and no one, not even Kate, guessed how his early reverse of fortune preyed upon his mind. Up to fifteen he had enjoyed the free, healthy outdoor life of an English country gentleman's son; his gun, his pony, his dogs had furnished him with occupation and interest: now he sat all day in the dingy back parlour of a shop, and, as his only pleasure and relaxation, devoured the very miscellaneous

literature that the doctor, a kind and clever young man, charitably placed at his disposal. Even physically the change was disastrous; while its effects on the boy's higher nature only time could tell. But he was now no longer an actual invalid, though certainly neither strong nor healthy.

After looking for some minutes at the "Morte d'Arthur" without reading it, Archie suddenly resumed, "I say, Kate, sometimes I get so sick of the life I'm leading, that I almost think—I almost think—I must—" He paused, as if the next words were too hard for him to utter.

Kate looked up, frightened by his vehemence; and she was still more frightened by his face as she saw it through the gathering twilight. Her heart seemed to stand still. What desperate step was he meditating? Running off to sea—enlisting—drowning himself even?

Archie ended her suspense. With a desperate effort, and the air of a martyr announcing his determination to go to the stake, he completed his sentence, "I almost think—I must go into the shop!"

This was scarcely so bad as she expected,

yet quite bad enough. She flushed hotly. "Uncle has not said anything to you, has he?" she asked.

"Never once. Kate, Uncle Morris is a brick!" There was a wealth of genuine gratitude flung into the boyish word that redeemed it from all trace of vulgarity.

"If father were alive, what would he say?" questioned Kate. "I think he would be horrified at the very thought."

"Well, I don't know," mused Archie, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "After all, the horrible thing is eating the shop,—I mean the bread that's made in it. And since I do that already, and can't help myself, I think it would not make things any worse to earn it before I eat it."

Kate was silent; she began to suspect Archie was talking good sense, but she did not like to admit it, even to herself.

Presently Archie went on, and with vehemence: "What else *can* I do? I'm nearly eighteen; too old for school, even if there were money to send me there, which there isn't. I can read and write, but that's about all; and I don't see how either of these valuable accomplishments is to get

my bread. I'm too old for the sea. I'm too old for those 'exams' they talk about, even if I had books, and brains, and could pay for a 'coach' to cram me."

"You are not strong enough either," Kate put in.

"I'm quite strong enough for that other thing. It isn't that I'm ashamed of it, but that I hate it—*hate it*," he went on passionately. "I can't tell you how I detest the very thought of it. I'd rather be dead and in my grave than standing behind a counter selling reels and bodkins, and telling old women this stuff will wear and that other will wash, and all the rest of it."

"I know it is hard," said Kate sadly, and quite regardless of the anti-climax; "but, Archie, if it is *right*?" Presently she went on, with some diffidence, and even hesitation, "Archie dear, if we ask God to show us the way and to help us—he does it."

"Don't know," muttered Archie; "perhaps." But the look in his deep-set, wistful eyes belied the carelessness of his words; it was such a look as one sometimes sees in the face of a very intelligent dumb

creature—a dog, for instance, that knows his master is in trouble and wants to understand and share it—a creature reaching out towards something beyond the grasp of its nature, vexed and baffled, but still longing and aspiring. However, Kate could not see all this in the darkening room, so she only thought her words had missed their aim, and regretted having spoken them.

Just then their aunt bustled in, kind and busy as usual. “Still blinding your eyes over that work, Katie dear? Put it by at once, and like a good girl run upstairs and see after Joe and Minnie; they ought to be in bed by this time.”

Archie she did not seem to notice. This was no lack of kindness; had he needed her she would have turned to him at once, but the task of keeping the household wheels in motion absorbed all her energies, and Archie was not a wheel, nor, at present, any part of the machine. He could no longer see to read, and the laws of the frugal household did not allow of the gas being lighted so early; so he lounged upstairs, and having reached the attic where he slept, stood looking out of the little

window, which gave him, besides a patch of sky, a glimpse of distant trees and fields, and of a river winding amongst them.

His own accomplishments he rated at about their true market value. In better times he had been a careless and irregular day-scholar at an indifferent academy in the town near his home. His father, selfish in his very indulgence, would have refused him no costly luxury he coaxed him for, but would by no means incur the expense of sending him to a good boarding-school. His own life was one continual sacrifice of the future to the present, and without deliberate intention he did all that in him lay to make his son's the same. Boys readily take the tone from their elders; and only a very uncommon and precocious boy would have put his heart into studies to which no one else appeared to attach the slightest importance. When Archie brought home his first prize, his father scarcely noticed it or him; when he brought down his first partridge, he was praised and made much of. Consequently, Master Archie brought home no more prizes, but devoted himself to the use of

the excellent double-barrelled gun his father had given him, as diligently as if he were qualifying himself for the office of game-keeper. Yet he loved well enough to pore over a book on wet days or on winter evenings.

Now, in his changed life, books were everything to him. He could as little afford to be fastidious about their quality as a starving man about that of his food. He devoured everything in the shape of print, newspapers perhaps excepted; the difficulty lay in keeping up the supply at all with his limited opportunities.

He was still inwardly the same Archie Lyndon whose foot was ever in the stirrup or on the heath, and whose joy was in motion, excitement, adventure. His body might be chained to the fireside or the sofa, but his spirit, set free by that most potent of all magicians whose wand is the compositor's "stick," traversed earth and ocean, and was at home amidst the snows of Siberia or the burning sands of Africa. Books of travel were the very staff of his mental life, but fiction of no kind came amiss to him, and he read a good deal of

history, some poetry, and even a little science. The doctor lent him the current periodicals of the day; and thus a multitude of theories and speculations, as well as a quantity of facts and reflections, were flung at hap-hazard into the immature mind of a thoughtful boy, at the age when it is the proper business of a young mind to acquire, and not to select, to compare, or to criticise. Archie's instinct led him to supply himself with as much intellectual food as he could possibly obtain; but between the wholesome and the deleterious he had no power of judging, and unhappily no one to judge for him.

His mother had found comfort for many sorrows in the hope that is anchored "within the veil;" and the same comfort upheld the gentle heart of his sister. But to Archie there only remained a fond remembrance of his mother and her teaching, and a vague desire to do right and to please God. Latterly even this was disturbed and perplexed by the results of his heterogeneous reading, which brought him into premature and perilous acquaintance with the scepticism of the present day.

Moreover, his uncle was a Nonconformist, the mainstay of an Independent chapel; and Archie was confused by the absence of the familiar prayers and observances with which all his ideas of religion were associated. "It isn't like church, or like Sunday either," he told Kate; who, for her part, was content enough, since the Name she loved was honoured and the Presence she loved was sought and found in the white-washed chapel of Beacon Street, Middlesbury, as well as in the ivy-mantled church of her early home. Yet undoubtedly, for her brother, the change was to be regretted. It contributed to cut him loose from his past, and to set him adrift. Whither he was to drift was the all-important question, and one to which, as yet, no answer appeared.

II.

A CHANCE FOUND.

No especial interest attached to post-hour in the household of Robert Morris. Few letters arrived except for its head; and his were chiefly business communications. But one morning at breakfast, as he sorted the little heap beside his plate, he paused and read aloud, with a slight touch of surprise, “‘Archer E. Lyndon, Esq.’ A London post-mark! There, Archie, that’s for you.” He was soon engrossed in his own letters, whilst his wife dispensed the tea, and five children, of different ages, busied themselves in diminishing a formidable pile of bread and butter. It was only Kate who noticed the sudden flush upon Archie’s face and the sparkle in his eye as he read his letter. Looking up, he met her glance, and returned it with one that said, as plainly as

looks could do,—“Great news!” He made a motion as if to hand her the letter, but apparently recollecting himself, passed it instead to his uncle, at the foot of the table.

What Robert Morris read was as follows:—

“DEAR NEPHEW,—It is possible you have never heard of me, for I left England twenty years ago—before you were born. I must explain, therefore, that I am your father’s brother, Edward Lyndon. I have been a great wanderer, and have met many changes of fortune. But I need not tell you my history now; all that concerns you at present is that I have realized a handsome fortune. I am the owner of a large cotton plantation in one of the Fiji Islands, and this property grows more valuable every day. I have neither wife nor child, and I would not be sorry to have one of my own blood and name to help me now, and to stand in my shoes by-and-by. I do not know, of course, what sort of a fellow you may be. If you expect to go through the world with your hands in your pockets,

and some one by to feed you with a spoon, you and I will never pull together. But if you are a brisk lad, with no nonsense about you, who can call a spade by its right name, and use it too with a purpose, I can make a rich man of you; and my will is good to do it. Run up to town and spend a week with me. If we do not agree, there is no harm done; if we do, we can settle details of outfit, etc.

“Present my compliments to Mr. Morris, and say I thank him, in the name of all the Lyndons, for his kindness to my nephew and niece.—Your affectionate uncle,

“E. LYNDON.”

The address given was that of a hotel in the Strand.

“A sensible letter—*very*,” said Robert Morris, on whom, perhaps, the concluding sentence was not without its influence. “Now, Archie, my lad, there’s your chance.”

Archie only answered by a nod; but though his lips were silent, his feelings found expression in his beaming face.

From that moment the change in his look and bearing was wonderful,—

“He moved about the house with joy,
And with the certain step of man.”

It is true that Kate's tearful eyes, and the faltering voice in which she tried to congratulate him, moved him more than he cared to show. But nothing could effectually dim the splendour of the prospect that opened out before his eager young eyes. To find work, a place, a career, to be a man amongst men, a factor in the great sum of the world's industry,—instead of a waif, an encumbrance, a piece of property claimed by nobody, was enough in itself to fill his heart with courage and with joy. But to go to the Tropics, the home of his romance and his dreams, to see all the wonders of earth and ocean—this was more than joy, it was rapture. His imagination became a chaos of confused, gorgeous visions, where palm trees, lions, elephants, temples and palaces full of gold and ivory, coral islands in seas of rose and violet, “strange bright birds on starry wings,” mingled as they never mingled yet in any region trodden by mortal footsteps.

After due preparation he started for London, and in high spirits, consoling Kate

with the promise that he would write every day and tell her everything.

He kept his word, and his letters, if not long, were cheerful and satisfactory. He described his uncle as "very jolly," and said they were "getting along first-rate." He told of various sights and places of amusement to which "Uncle Ned" had taken him; mentioning amongst them a visit to Drury Lane, over which Morris and his wife shook their heads. One letter contained the significant words, "Uncle Ned says he sees I have stuff in me to make a man of, and he has no doubt we shall do well together."

He had gone to London on Tuesday; and this letter, written on Saturday, reached Middlesbury on Sunday morning. On the following day, the Morrises were seated at their early dinner, when Archie walked in, with his carpet-bag in his hand. Exclamations and greetings followed; all were surprised to see him, but all made him welcome, and he took a seat at the table with the rest. But his brief replies to the questions asked of him, and his downcast looks, soon convinced his aunt and his

sister (the most observant members of the party) that something was seriously wrong. Indeed, the more Kate watched him, the more uneasy she grew. He looked ten years older than when he went to London.

Nothing of importance was said until the children left the room, when his uncle opened the subject. "Well, Archie, when are you to go up again?"

Archie cleared his throat, and began twice before he succeeded in getting out his words: "Not at all, sir. It's all up."

"O Archie!" cried Mrs. Morris and Kate in one breath.

His uncle's disappointment was keener and his displeasure much more serious. "What unheard-of folly is this?" he asked, in tones never used before to his orphan nephew. "To lose such a chance! But there—;" he checked himself, and continued more gently, "Perhaps you could not help it. Perhaps he saw you were not the man for him, not fit for his work, in fact, and refused to have anything to do with you. He may have thought you not strong enough—*that* is no fault of yours."

"It wasn't that," said Archie briefly.

“Well, and what was it, then?” resumed Morris, his temper rising again. “Do you mean to say you were such a fool as to object to the life of a cotton-planter—or whatever else he may be; that you did not want to rough it, as every beginner must do; did not like the danger and the hardship, eh?”

“Would like nothing better,” Archie half said, half sighed.

“Then why did you lose your chance when you got it? Such chances don’t grow on every bush, I can tell you. May I ask you, How do you expect to get on in the world at all? What do you intend to do with yourself? How do you suppose—”

“Hush, dear,” his wife gently interrupted, laying her hand on his arm; “don’t get vexed. I daresay it was not Archie’s fault. Somehow or other his uncle saw the plan would not answer; so the boy, having a spirit of his own, just said, ‘No, I thank you,’ that ‘Go about your business’ might not be said to him.—Was not that it, Archie?”

“No,” said Archie, with an effort, “not

quite. But there's no use talking; and, if you please, I'd rather not."

"That's so," Morris acquiesced gloomily. "At least, if the mischief is *really* done past mending. Is it, though?"

"It is," said Archie doggedly.

"Then I have nothing more to say," continued Morris, "except what I said before,—you have had your chance and lost it; and what is to be done with you now, I'm sure I can't imagine."

Having said this, Morris went off to his shop; for he was a conscientious, God-fearing man, who kept the door of his lips, and though sorely vexed, he did not wish to say what he might afterwards repent.

Archie followed him, and stopped him in the little passage. "Uncle," he said, "one word more. I thought it all out last night, and again to-day in the train. I see I have no right to be any longer a burden and an idler. If you please, will you take me into the shop? I don't like it; but you shall see I'll stick to it, like a man."

"For a week," answered Morris, scarcely mollified by the frank confession of dislike

to a mode of life which he thought second to none in comfort, usefulness, and respectability. "Don't come to me thinking how condescending you are, and how much above it, and all that sort of stuff."

A hot flush burned on Archie's cheek, and he answered, in a voice that sounded stiff and constrained, because he would not let it be passionate, "I never gave you cause to say I thought myself above anything, and I never mean to, sir. If you take me, I'll do my best, and that is the best any man can do; if you refuse, I'll go away and enlist."

"Well, we shall see," said Morris, in a kinder tone; and Archie, considering his point gained and the interview closed, escaped to his attic.

He soon heard Kate's gentle voice entreating admittance. He opened the door, and she came in and settled herself in the low chair she always occupied during her frequent visits to her brother's "den," as he called it.

"Well, Archie, what was it? Tell me," she said, raising her soft gray eyes appealingly to his.

He seated himself on his bed, amidst a confused heap of things which he had been pulling out of his bag. "It was all well till yesterday," he began drearily; "we got on together like—like a cart-load of bricks. He told me no end of fine things about the country, and seemed to think the life would just suit me, and I the life. Well, you know yesterday was Sunday. He said to me, 'I don't go to church myself; but you ought to see St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. Go to St. Paul's in the forenoon, and to the Abbey in the afternoon; then we can dine together, and find some amusement for the evening.'"

"Not go to church? How odd!" said Kate.

"So I thought," Archie went on; "but it did not seem my business to say anything. I did as he told me; and after the morning service he said to me, 'I think I'll just go to the Abbey with you, and have a look at the old place. After all, I'm an Englishman.' So we went. O Kate!—but I won't talk now of the glorious old building, and the windows, and the music; all that will keep, and I mean

to keep it for ever and ever. It is worth it. Well, we came home by a beautiful broad walk, with trees, near the river; he called it the Embankment. The place was quiet, and he began to talk as he had never talked to me before. Kate, he does not believe there's a God above us at all, nor any life at all after this! He thinks that when we die we just *go out*, like a candle! How could I follow a man like that to the ends of the earth?"

"Oh!"—with a sudden look of surprise and interest; "then that was it?"

Archie nodded. "He told me I might think whatever I liked, it was no business of his; and I said to myself, 'Why, yes, so I can.' For I wanted to go with him just *awfully*, and it seemed bitter hard to give it all up. But he told me, too, that I must *do* what he liked. He couldn't have a difference made between Sundays and Mondays, or any fuss or bother of that kind. I must take things as I found them, and live in Fiji like a Fijian; only, he was good enough to say, I need not cook my neighbours and eat them, unless I liked that too. Now, Kate, just think of a

fellow off there, at the other side of the world, without Sunday, or church, or chapel, or any one to change a word with who thought himself better than the beasts that perish. Wouldn't I get like that myself in a little while? And what good would all the sights, or all the money in the world do me if—

“He was very angry, of course, and thought me the greatest of fools.—Ay, that reminds me, he gave me a twenty-pound note, saying I was to pay for my journey out of it, as it was not fair to the Morrisises to send me up to London on a wild goose chase; and the rest was to be a present for you, because, he said, since he had not the pleasure of your acquaintance, at least he did not know *you* to be an incorrigible idiot. Complimentary, wasn't it?” and Archie indulged in a laugh more rueful than mirthful.

But Kate answered seriously, “Archie, I don't know what others may think, but *I* think you have done well—well and nobly.”

Had he done well? He scarcely asked himself the question, so sure was he that

he could not have done otherwise. The sacrifice had cost him a pang beyond words, but there had been no doubt in his mind, and therefore little conflict. Yet certainly life looked as black that night to Archer Lyndon as it has ever done to the wistful, eager eyes of youth. And that is much to say; since the quiet neutral tints, the sombre, shadowy yet oftentimes restful blues and grays, which form to older eyes the staple of most landscapes, have seldom any existence at all for the young. They cannot see gray; in their eyes everything is dazzling white, or blackness of darkness—and the latter much more frequently than their elders suppose. There is no despair so utter as the quick, keen despair of youth. True, it is not often lasting, but at the time the sufferer thinks it eternal as the pyramids.

When night came, Archie sat upon his bed mute and motionless. He was tired enough, but it seemed as if the energy necessary to undress and go to rest in the usual way was lacking to him. He was looking backwards on the dream he had lost, and onwards to his gloomy future,

without either hope or pleasure, though with a dogged resolution to do his best and quit himself like a man. And then it was that a new thought came to him, striking him suddenly, as it were with a flash of lightning. Why was it that he could not go, whither the longing of his heart had gone before him, to the sweet and sunny isles of the Pacific? Only because he knew that it was better to give up all that than to give up his faith in God. Young as he was, he understood what it meant to be without God in the world. Through the reviews and magazines lent him by the doctor he had made, as has been already intimated, a premature acquaintance with the "agnostic" literature of the day. He was well aware that there were many men "of cultured soul and sapient eye serene" who believed quite as little as did his uncle. He knew also how easy was the descent into that gulf of unbelief. He had even sometimes dreamed of it as a possibility for himself—dreamed of it, to awake shuddering, as one just dropping asleep starts in terror, thinking he is falling down a precipice.

And now he pictured himself, in that far land of his desire, a successful, prosperous man, with every luxury around him that his boyish fancy could devise. Here, too, his reading helped him. He thought of—

“Larger constellations burning, mellow moons, and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of paradise:
Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag;
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from
the crag;
Droops the heavy-blossomed flower, hangs the heavy-fruited
tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.”

A paradise for beauty and for glory. But then, no Sunday rest, no church-bell with its call to prayer. And, infinitely worse, no God, no Father in heaven, no divine Saviour. He fancied himself dying there alone, with this life and all its joys behind him; and before him nothing except blank and utter darkness—an eternal sleep.

“It is not true—*not true!* Thank God, it is not true!” he cried aloud; “there *is* God and Christ. ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son.’” And then, for the first time, it dawned upon his mind that believing,

really believing in the Father and the Son, meant *having* the Father and the Son; that God was *his* God, the Father *his* Father. Of the fact that sin had raised a bar of separation between him and God he had a distinct consciousness; but then, was not the Son of God the Saviour also? The story of his love had been written long ago upon his young mind by the mother's hand that was now cold in death; and to-night the letters flashed out into sudden glory as if touched by living fire. How could he be miserable in the world where God was and Christ, and where God and Christ loved him, cared for him, would be with him all his life long?

His candle had gone out unheeded, and the stars shone through his attic window. He looked up at those mysterious altar-fires of the courts of God's temple, and words he had somewhere read passed through his mind:—"Beyond the stars there are other stars, whose light, travelling since Earth was young, has not yet reached her; but Thou, immeasurably greater, art also immeasurably nearer." It seemed to Archer Lyndon that God was near him indeed, that he

stood that night in His very presence-chamber. With a new, solemn joy in his heart, he knelt down and repeated, as he was wont to do, the familiar words of prayer learned at his mother's knee, "Our Father which art in heaven."

It was all full of meaning now, and every word came from his heart. If he added any words of his own, they were few and very simple. His trust was that of a child who sees, and feels, and loves, but does not reason or speculate. "Surely God is in this place," he said within himself as he lay down to sleep.

III.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

"I CANNOT make myself like it, but I can make myself do it well," said Archer Lyndon of his new work.

"If you do it *very* well," answered wise little Kate, "you will get to like it in the end."

His position was altered in the household, and especially towards its head. Morris had shown himself generous and forbearing in no small degree towards his wife's young relative. He had never grudged him the shelter of his roof or a place at his table, though he had been sorely tried by the labours his frequent illnesses entailed on the already sufficiently burdened wife and mother of his large family. Yet while regarding the boy as an encumbrance, he had at the same time a kind of unacknowl-

edged respect for him, as for one belonging originally to a higher sphere than his own, and perhaps destined one day to return to it. Archie was like a parcel left upon his hands: while it did not belong to him, he was bound to respect it, and also at liberty to suppose its contents might prove valuable; but when given up to him in liquidation of a bad debt it lost importance, though at the same time it acquired interest in his eyes; it might not be very precious, but then it was his own. "My wife's nephew, Mr. Lyndon's son, one of the Lyndons of ——shire," dropped down into "one of our young men;" but if Archie's new place was lowlier, it was far more comfortable.

Kate, of course, did not allow her relatives to remain in ignorance of the true motives of her brother's conduct; and although, very properly, nothing was said to him on the subject, still he was allowed to feel that he had the approbation and confidence of those around him.

Many things passed through his mind during the first months of his new life. In spite of his distasteful occupation he

was happy, for the light that had dawned upon his sorrow and despair never wholly faded away. His uncle and aunt and his sister were devout communicants, and he sometimes thought he ought to apply for permission to join them. But the necessity of speaking about it, the examinations and discussions to be gone through, alarmed and repelled him. With the deepening of all his experience came a great though temporary access of reserve and shyness. It was the instinct of nature: the young bud is closely veiled, the young life begins to grow in darkness and in silence. Yet it must be owned that part of his reluctance to "speak to Mr. Prout" had another and a lower cause. That really excellent and able young man found no favour in Archie's eyes. The young are prone to these capricious and unreasonable dislikes; but Archie in this case had a reason, though scarcely a good one. Mr. Prout was a frequent visitor of the Morrisises, and allowed it to be seen that pretty Kate Lyndon was the magnet that attracted him. Kate was still Archie's ideal of womanhood, and the object of all his boyish chivalry.

He would scarcely have thought an earl worthy of her hand, certainly not unless the earl were young, handsome, and good. Of Mr. Prout's goodness there could be no question; but he was not so tall as Archie himself, and he wore spectacles.

"Uncle Robert," said Archie one day, "have you any objection to my going to church?"

"I would certainly prefer your going with us. Why do you ask?"

"My father and mother went to church, and all of us till we came here."

"Well, if you have any strong and decided wish in the matter I shall not oppose you. That is," he resumed after a pause, "you may have my permission to go to St. Andrew's, where a plain man preaches Christ to plain men; but no one out of my house shall set foot in St. Dunstan's. If you want crosses and candles, you may go a little further; to the Roman Catholic chapel, of which it is a bad imitation. I confess I prefer the genuine article."

"It is to St. Andrew's that I wish to go. I like Mr. Watson's preaching."

“Then go there. But mark me, Archie, you must make your choice and keep it. I’ll have no giving Mr. Prout a hearing to-day, and Mr. Watson a hearing to-morrow, as if they kept opposition shops, and you felt bound to divide your important patronage between them, criticising both and learning from neither; so that, if you happen to be ill or in trouble, you are everybody’s business, which means nobody’s.”

Archie agreed to these conditions. He became first a regular attendant at St. Andrew’s; then a communicant; lastly, to everybody’s surprise, and his own no less, a Sunday-school teacher. “I want to do something directly for Christ,” he said to himself,—“something which, but for Him, I would not do at all; something, too, which will help to make others love Him as I do.”

Many a grand work that the world praises has been done from poor, low motives; and many a trivial, commonplace work from motives the very highest that can sway the heart of man. The same divine impulse that filled the soul of the early martyr when he wrote, “It is better

to die for Jesus Christ than to reign over all the kingdoms of the earth," reconciled Archie Lyndon Sunday after Sunday to his seat amidst a group of noisy, restless urchins, whom he endeavoured, with more zeal than success, to instruct in the Church Catechism, and other things "which a Christian ought to know for his soul's health."

The romance of the Sunday school has yet to be written, and there is enough to fill a goodly volume. Heroic faith, patience, and love have often played their parts upon that humble theatre. But Archie's first experiences were unfavourable. "The younger the teacher the younger the class," is a plausible but mistaken rule. Very young minds are usually lacking in flexibility, and the really difficult task of translating older thoughts into the language of childhood requires time and experience, and above all "the heart at leisure from itself," so seldom given to youth. While this is true in a measure of both sexes, the girl's natural tact, readiness, and love of children give her a manifest advantage. Had Archie resigned his seat in favour of his sister, the

class would have hailed the change with acclamation, and the delighted superintendent would have beheld a half-circle of brown heads clustering around her chair, instead of a row of careless vacant faces in various stages of inattention.

Still Archie persevered, week after week, month after month, strengthened by the thought of Him for whose sake he was trying to do this work. He could have said truly at this time with the German poet-theologian, "I have but one passion, and that is He—He alone."

One day, in the shop, some one casually remarked in his hearing, "Willie Maxwell is very ill." Willie was the errand boy, a saucy, black-eyed lad of fourteen, who in some unaccountable way had become a favourite with Mr. Morris and his assistants. He belonged to one of those families which are a standing perplexity to clergymen and district visitors, every adult member being a devoted worshipper of England's Moloch, the demon of drink. Willie was pretty much what might be expected in the child of such a home. Once and again his bright eyes and pleasant ways had made friends

for him, and he had been clothed and induced to go to the parish school; but in a few weeks at farthest the clothes found their way to the pawn-office, and Willie found his to the exciting pastimes of the street. However, at this period a few very sanguine persons thought he was improving, and "might do yet," for he had been six months Mr. Morris's errand-boy, and only six times threatened with dismissal. Archie thought sadly of his wretched home, in which certainly the sick boy could find no comfort for either soul or body. He was relieved to hear his uncle say that evening, "Wife, you must send poor little Maxwell some broth."

"I have some left from the children's dinner, but there is no one to go with it."

"I will take it, if you please, aunt," said Archie; and that night he made his first acquaintance with the sordid poverty that means a constant struggle with starvation. He made, too, his first mistake in the difficult and delicate art of giving; and, in every art, the first mistake is usually synonymous with the first step. Unable to resist the wail, "No dinner to-day or yesterday, no

breakfast for to-morrow," and fearing that unless the wants of the family were relieved very little of the much-needed nourishment he brought would reach poor Willie, he produced half-a-crown, which he had hoarded towards the purchase of a longed-for book. "I can learn 'Rabbi ben Ezra' by heart," he said; "and it was that I wanted most in the 'Selections from Browning.'"

Willie could not be got to talk in the presence of others; but his wan and wasted face and the sad look in his eyes followed Archie everywhere. He came again and yet again to see him, bringing little delicacies—sometimes gifts from Mrs. Morris, sometimes purchases of his own. But the ghost of that unfortunate half-crown (which of course had found its way at once into the publican's till) seemed to haunt him and to spoil his every chance of doing good. He could not cross the threshold of the miserable room without being assailed by somebody begging for something. He was never left a moment alone with Willie, perhaps from a mistaken idea of politeness, perhaps from a fear that the boy might tell him more than was convenient. Archie

was too young, and far too shy, to be able under these circumstances to speak of things not seen. Doing great violence to his own feelings, he one day proposed to read a chapter to Willie. The boy assented, as he thought, eagerly, and a battered Testament was produced, from which he read the parable of the Prodigal Son. Willie's father showed as much inattention as he could without open incivility, and one of his grown-up brothers clattered noisily out of the room in the midst of the reading. But the old grandmother brought her stool near him, and, fixing on his face keen black eyes like Willie's, listened with a breathless intentness that gave him courage to add a trembling word or two about the love and tenderness of the divine Father. The old woman assented eagerly, "Ay, sure, it's the beautiful story, that it is; and it does my poor soul good to hear it. And it's the fine reader you be, Mr. Lyndon; and much obliged to you we be, all on us." Then, lowering her voice confidentially, "And Mr. Lyndon, dear, do you think the parson up to St. Andrew's might happen to have a coal ticket or two to give away?"

The disgusted Archie beat a speedy retreat, and thus ended his first attempt to “’spound and ’splain like a parson,” as the Maxwells expressed it amongst themselves. He was grievously discouraged; but at last a happy thought occurred to him. Willie might be found alone on a Sunday afternoon, when the various members of the family would be taking their pleasure in the public-house, or at best in the fields.

Next Sunday he tried this plan. His aunt gave him a few slices of cold beef from their Sunday dinner, and Kate’s deft fingers made them into a tempting sandwich for the invalid. To Archie’s great satisfaction Willie was alone. He took the food, and began to devour it with an eagerness that showed it was sorely needed. Knowing that the hunger of the soul could not be awakened until that of the body was appeased, Archie sat and watched him patiently, thinking of Him who fed the weary multitude, having compassion on them, “for divers of them came from far.” He knew every fisher’s hut by the Galilean lake,—did He not know as well poor Willie Maxwell’s wretched home, and how

hard it was to be good amidst such surroundings?

"That's prime!" said Willie at last, with a long sigh, half of regret that the sandwich was no more, half of satisfaction that it had been so good.

"You look better now," remarked Archie, viewing with satisfaction a tinge of colour in his face. "Indeed, I think you are getting better; are you not?"

"I feel goodish, now I've got the grub," Willie admitted candidly. "But most times I'm that weak I can't tell you. And my back *do* ache. Look at my arm, Mr. Lyndon," said the boy, drawing up his ragged shirt sleeve. "I think as how Mrs. Pratt's baby next door has a thicker one. And it isn't six months since I fought big Tom Bolton and knocked him down, and he's seventeen, Mr. Lyndon, he is, if he's a day. Knocked him down, I did!" Willie repeated, with the emphasis of gratified pride; "and old Symes, the cobbler, was looking on, and says he, 'Will, my lad, you're the pluckiest little chap in all Middlesbury;' and he gave me a shilling to drink his health. And me and Tom we made

it up, and we drank the shilling together. Tom comes to see me often.—But now, Mr. Lyndon, *now*, I couldn't knock a sparrow down,—no, not to save my life."

"The summer is coming; you may lose your cough and grow stronger," said Archie.

"I may, sir, but I won't. Folk say that, thinking to cheer me up, like; but I know better. Oh, *I* know a thing or two! When a fellow wastes away, like me, it's what they call a *consummation*, and neither food nor physic does him the least of good; he just grows worser and worser—until he dies."

"Well, Willie," said Archie gravely, "and *what then?*"

Willie half raised himself, and gazed earnestly into the kind face that was bending over him. "That's just what I want yer to tell me," he said in a sort of breathless whisper.

"What do you think about it yourself, Willie?"

"I think good boys go to heaven when they die. They have harps, and crowns, and banners, and they sing hymns. S'pose they gets to like it somehow; for they're

real happy any way, and they're never sick or hungry any more. But—I'm not good."

"What makes you say that?"

"O Mr. Lyndon, *you* know, you that was with me in the shop. Besides, heaps of things you don't know—bad words as I've said, and stories I've told, and odds and ends I've took as I'd no call to."

"Then, Willie, you're quite sure you don't deserve to go to heaven?"

Willie nodded decidedly. "Where'll I go, then?" he asked.

"You will go before the great God who made you and gave you your life, and told you to be a good boy and do his will. You knew that, Willie, and yet you did not even try to obey him. What do you think he will say to you?"

"He'll be real angry," said Willie uneasily. "O Mr. Lyndon, I'm afraid."

"He *is* angry always with sin. He cannot but be angry, because he is altogether holy. But he is sorry to punish sinners, because he is altogether kind and good."

"Do you think there's a chance he'll let me off?"

"There is a *way* in which he forgives—a wise, right, good way, like himself. If I were as ill as you are, Willie, I think I would not be afraid to die."

"Because you're good," Willie put in eagerly.

"No. I may not have done the same wrong things you have, but I have done other things just as wrong.—No. Listen to me. When I stand before the great God to be judged, One will come in with me who is my friend, and He will put his hand upon me and say, 'I answer for him. I have taken all his sins away. Forgive him for my sake.' Willie, who is that? Surely you can guess."

Willie thought a moment, and then said, "Jesus."

"The Lord Jesus," said Archie reverently, with a low thrill in his voice. The water he was offering another welled up clear and fresh from the springs of his own spiritual life. Not yet had the worker's subtle snare been spread for him, the snare of handling that Name as an instrument more to be prized for the work it has to accomplish than for its own transcendent

worth and preciousness. Very simply he told Willie the "old story" that is ever new. So absorbed were both that the boisterous entrance of Willie's father, more than half intoxicated, seemed to bring them back suddenly from another world. Archie just lingered to see that the sick boy was not likely to be annoyed, and to whisper a promise to visit him next Sunday at the same hour. Then he went home, full of strange new gladness. It was the first time he had ever spoken "from very heart to very heart."

Contrary to his own expectation, and to that of the very few who cared at all about him, Willie Maxwell did not die. As the season advanced his health improved slowly, partly owing to the nourishing food supplied him by the Morrises, partly to the fresh interest Archie's visits awakened in his life. These visits were now Archie's regular Sunday afternoon work, while his class occupied his mornings. As a teacher, he seemed to himself to be doing little good or none, and he was often tempted to resign; but he persevered, "faithful in that which is least;" and he had his reward.

One fine Sunday morning he suddenly became aware that every face in his restless little flock was turning towards the door.

"Teacher, there's a great big chap coming into our class," said one of the little fellows, ignoring the call to order. True enough; Archie saw the superintendent advancing towards him, followed by Willie Maxwell, looking very tall and pale, and in garments he had much outgrown.

"This lad wishes to sit with your class, if you please, Mr. Lyndon," said the superintendent. Archie had no desire for such an auditor. He welcomed his *protégé* kindly, of course, but explained to him how much more comfortable he would find himself amongst the lads of his own age who formed the curate's class at the other end of the room.

Willie shook his head. "I be come to be with you, Mr. Lyndon," he said doggedly.

There was no help for it; Archie placed a chair for him beside himself, and proceeded with the business of the morning. His class could not yet read with intelligence, so it was his habit to tell them a Bible

story as soon as their appointed lessons had been repeated and explained. At first their ignorance was his great trouble, now their knowledge began to be embarrassing. "Teacher, you told us that before;" "Teacher, I know,—the lions durs'n't eat him;" "Teacher, he hit the giant on the head with a little stone;"—these or similar observations often brought his best-intended efforts to an untimely end. He was learning, therefore, to go out of the beaten track in his search for stories, and to tell them in a simple, lively, dramatic way, with a brief, unexpected word of application thrown in here and there. On this day he was more successful than ever before in gaining and holding the attention of his little auditors with the story of Jonathan's first and last recorded military exploit. He described the brave young prince and his gallant comrade stealing through the sleeping camp, climbing the rocky fortress, throwing themselves alone into the midst of the enemy, leaving a lane of dead behind them straight as a furrow in a field. Then he told how strangely the glorious victory was dimmed and saddened—how the honey, so

innocently tasted, nearly cost the life of him who "saved Israel that day." He had just announced the sentence of the ruthless king and father, "God do so and more also, for thou shalt surely die,"—when the inexorable bell was heard, and the lesson was at an end. After the closing prayer, his boys clustered round him,—
"Teacher, tell us the end;" "Teacher, did he kill him?" "I shall finish the story next Sunday," said wise Archie.

Next Sunday Willie appeared again, and lingered after the school was dismissed. "Mr. Lyndon," he said, "if it weren't for them little chaps, Joe and Ned Willis would like to come, and so would Tom Bolton. Tom says that's a fine story about the lad as ate the honey, and I'm to tell him the rest of it."

It ended in Archie's resigning the children, and being given a quiet corner of the schoolroom, where four or five rough lads, almost young men, sat around him. They were all of Willie's finding.

"I'm your armour-bearer, Mr. Lyndon," said he, with his fine eyes sparkling. "I'm the boy that's to come up after you, and

to do all that's in your heart." Thus he applied, after a fashion of his own, the first Scripture story he heard in the class.

From that hour the work of a teacher took a new meaning for Archer Lyndon. He threw his whole soul into it. He talked to those youths—who were some of them almost his own age—of the temptations, the struggles, the hopes they and he shared together. He set before him the definite aim of leading each one to the foot of the cross, and aiding each one to lead a manly, Christian life. He helped them in every way he could. With no theory on the subject he became a total abstainer, that he might be able to say to Willie Maxwell, or to any other circumstanced as he was, "Come thou up *after me*," as did Jonathan to his armour-bearer. It was no longer a difficult and irksome task to study for his class. Instead of his moments of preparation being disturbed by thoughts of the books he loved, it was the faces of his scholars that came between him and the histories, the travels, the poems that were the joy of his brief leisure. Nay, these were often laid under contribution

to illustrate or enforce the lessons he tried to teach.

Not that his success as a teacher was uniform or rapid. For a time the class continued very small: one Sunday he had only two scholars, Willie and Tom Bolton. But from that day his numbers gradually rose; and when wintry weather made Sunday rambles unattractive, they reached sixteen or eighteen. Then a separate room was found for him; and the work he was doing began to be talked about. Of this, however, he was quite unconscious. He went on in all simplicity, toiling for his boys, loving them and helping them, and it never came into his mind to look at his work from the outside, as a subject either for censure or for praise.

IV.

AN IMPULSE.

“’Tis the taught already that profit by teaching.”

LEVEL ground is said to be more fatiguing to the pedestrian than that broken into hills and valleys, because these exercise a different set of muscles, and change is always a form of rest. Archer Lyndon’s path, for what seemed to himself quite a long period of his life, was a dull unbroken level. He was “not slothful in business;” he did his duty well, but without enthusiasm. He neither grew attached to the shop nor disgusted with it; neither caused his uncle any dissatisfaction nor inspired him with any wonderful faith in his abilities. He well knew that during the hours of business only half his nature, and that not the higher half, was occupied. Yet, as he prayed for daily bread, he knew that he ought also

to give thanks for it and for that by which he earned it; even though conscious of other needs within him which cried for bread of other kinds, and were not satisfied.

Though good-natured to all his associates, he formed no intimacies; and Kate was less his companion than she had been. Indeed, Archie regarded her proceedings at this time with toleration rather than with approval; for she was now the affianced bride of the minister of Deacon Street, and his own hour for similar aspirations not being yet come, he had no very great sympathy with hers. A man is always younger in proportion to his years than a woman; and Archie was in some respects unusually backward, having lost two or three important years of adolescence. Still, in other respects he was proportionably advanced; and a very busy intellectual life went on beneath the veil of an aspect outwardly quiet, and manners silent and shy.

It was a hot, languid summer day, about two years after he had entered the shop. White, blinding sunshine filled the streets of the town, where the water-carts droned lazily along, and people went about their

necessary work with weary, listless faces, only showing a little animation when they met their friends, and stood with them in the shade to talk of holiday plans and trips to the sea-side. If there is in any man the least touch of the vagrant, such weather brings it out. It brought back all Archie's visions of out-door life, of tropic climes and southern seas. His mind persisted in taking flight from organdie muslins, and best Japanese silks, and the newest thing in grenadine, to groves of spice and coral islands shaded with palms. He sang within himself, as he went leisurely about his duties,—

“‘Oh, the palms grew high in Avés, and fruits that shone like gold;

And the colibris and parrots, they were gorgeous to behold.’”

At last, during one of the lulls in business natural on such a day, he took himself gravely to task for this “far wandering of the soul in dreams.” “Fool that I am!” said the severest of monitors, a young uncompromising conscience, “dreaming of scenes upon which my eyes shall never rest, and slighting present duties for a

world of fancy thin as air, and fleeting and intangible as the will-of-the-wisp. Can I not serve God and man just as well standing behind a counter in Middlesbury as steering a canoe through coral reefs at the Antipodes? 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not...but thy life shall be given thee for a prey.' My life? And what *is* my life, after all? *Christ.* 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear.' Christ here as Saviour and friend; Christ hereafter as joy and reward 'exceeding great.' Is not that enough? and is not all the dull routine of daily life only his training for me, the moulding of the vessel?

'Look thou not down, but up
To uses of a cup,
The festive board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal;
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow—
Thou, Heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's
wheel?'

Master, mould me as thou wilt; only make me fit to hold thy wine at last."

Then there was a sudden change of thought, a rapid turning to things seen. A pleasant-looking lad, with public school-boy marked upon every detail of his dress,

stood before the counter. In an instant, and unconsciously, Archie's face assumed the "How-can-I-serve-you?" expression of the ready shopman.

But this was no customer. "Oh, I say, you are Archer Lyndon. I am your cousin Rutherford—Frank Rutherford."

"I am glad to see you," said Archie, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise at this school-boy greeting.

"My father is coming here to-day, on his way to Stainton, his new living. I am here to meet him. But the Harrow train comes in an hour and a half before the other one. So he told me to look you up while I was waiting, and ask you to dine with us at the Crown."

"I am very much obliged," said Archie heartily; for he thought, with genuine gratitude, that Mr. Rutherford was treating him, the shop assistant, exactly as he would have treated a school-fellow of his son's to whom he wished to show kindness.

It was easy to obtain a holiday from his uncle, and to devote himself to Frank's entertainment until the train was due, and the young Harrovian went to meet his

father; to whom he reported Archie as "a capital fellow," and said they "got along together first-rate." Nevertheless, it was with some trepidation that Archie presented himself at the door of the best hotel in Middlesbury, five minutes before six that evening.

The Rev. Harry Rutherford might not have remembered the existence of his young relative—and certainly, if he had, would have confined his attentions within the moderate limits of a passing call—but for a slight circumstance of which Archie was ignorant, and was destined always to remain so. The curate of St. Andrew's, Middlesbury, being on a holiday visit to parishioners of Mr. Rutherford's, dined at the rectory. As usual at rectories, the talk was frequently, though by no means exclusively, "of Sunday schools, and who takes whose duty." Mr. Parry told a sympathizing neighbour, at the dinner-table, of a helper of his who had gathered a class of rough lads no one else could reach, and kept them and tamed them in a wonderful way. Perhaps he spoke in a louder tone than he was conscious of, perhaps there was a lull

in the general conversation; at all events the remark reached the rector's ear, and he asked with some interest, "Of whom are you speaking?" Mr. Parry answered by giving, *con amore*, an account of Archie's class. The result was that Mr. Rutherford resolved to seek out Archer Lyndon, and to extend his hand to him, not in patronage, but in friendly greeting. This was one of the slender threads which sew the fabric of our lives into the form and fashion that is best for us. Such are not seen; they are not meant to be seen. Were they to obtrude themselves, the grace of their service would be lost; and yet we owe them more than we think.

Archie's natural shyness was considerably increased by the presence of Mrs. Rutherford and one of her daughters; an addition to the party Frank evidently had not expected. "One has no idea what a house is like without seeing it for oneself," Mrs. Rutherford observed truly; and she had brought with her, for help and companionship, quiet, clever Edith, the business-woman of the family. In after-years Archie's recollections of that day were rendered indistinct

by a kind of golden haze which brooded over everything, obscuring details. What was said to him, and what he said in answer, he scarcely knew; but he knew very well that he sat opposite to a fair girl, with a colour like the delicate, half-transparent tint of some rare shell, and hair that seemed to his fancy to be sprinkled with gold dust.

“ ‘Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold dust in her hair,’ ”

said Archie to himself, in the high-flown poetical mood of a very young man, whose path was crossed for the first time by a bit of living romance. It must be remembered that all the beautiful things Archie had ever known or loved had come to him out of the world of books, a world which seemed to have no point of contact with his daily life. Therefore the moment his eye rested on a sweet girlish face, beaming with gentleness, grace, and goodness, he felt as if a long train of previous association had kindled suddenly into meaning. Now he *saw* what poets *sang*.

But it was soon time for romance, not to vanish—that it does not do—but to with-

draw itself again into that secret chamber where, like the sleeping princess, it awaits its appointed hour to be awakened. Dinner was over; Frank and the ladies went out to walk, leaving Mr. Rutherford and Archie alone together.

“That is my youngest boy,” said Mr. Rutherford, as Frank left the room. “He is doing well at Harrow—very. He will be ready for Cambridge by Easter. He intends to enter the Church. Indeed,” he added, after a short pause, “it is his earnest desire to devote himself to missionary work. If his wish last, I shall not oppose it.”

He added some further particulars about his family, which had the effect of setting Archie quite at his ease. Amongst other things, he mentioned that one of his sons was in a merchant’s office in Liverpool, and was to be sent, in due time, to Rio Janeiro.

“Ah,” said Archie, “*I* should have liked that! But I had a long illness; and I was too old when I recovered to begin most kinds of life.”

“Edmund goes on with his education,” said Mr. Rutherford. “He studies after business hours. Do you?”

Archie hesitated. "I read a good deal," he said.

"Novels—eh?" asked Mr. Rutherford, with a smile.

"I *do* read a few,—very good ones,—such as tell of lives different from my own. Some of them have taught me a great deal; for instance, 'Westward Ho!'" Archie answered modestly, as one who differs, very reluctantly, with a person much older, and with whom he desires to stand well.

"True; one learns a great deal in play. A child who never played would never work to much purpose. Those who teach idiots say it is the hardest thing to make them play, and the most hopeful sign when they begin to do it of their own accord. But there is one thing that cannot be learned in play,—the habit of working hard."

"I do work," said Archie; "in the shop, and for my class."

"Good, so far. In the shop you gain the very valuable power of doing what, probably, you do not like, and doing it thoroughly. For the class, you study your subject, your lesson, and your pupils: in

the first, learning your Bible; in the second, the art of teaching; in the third, human nature. But, if you mean to grow, intellectually, to your full stature, you must also learn the long patience of the student, who toils for a distant end. You must discipline your mind to obey your will. You must not only eat the food that strengthens you, but test by exercise the strength you get from it."

"How can I do that?"

"Do not rest satisfied with mere desultory reading; study something."

"As history, for instance? I think I know a little history, here and there," said Archie, with becoming diffidence.

"I daresay you know a good deal. But what I desire for you is, that *all* your knowledge should not be described in that way. Let there be some one thing of which you do not 'think you know a little here and there,' but of which you possess a well-earned, definite, serviceable knowledge."

"What could I learn thus?"

"Where are the Greek and Latin you learned at school?"

Archie smiled rather sorrowfully. "Latin I have quite forgotten; Greek, except the alphabet, I never knew."

"Learn it now."

"Oh, Mr. Rutherford! I could not."

"Why not? I suggest Greek to you because it is a most desirable thing to establish a link between what you already know and care for and what you wish to learn. Every lover of his Bible must wish to read the New Testament in the original. If you only acquire Greek enough to do this with intelligence, you will have gained a very valuable possession. But it is possible you may go further, and read Homer and Plato."

"I should like that of all things," said Archie, his eyes kindling. "Juventus Mundi" had been his last enthusiasm. "But, sir, would it not require much more time than I could afford, without giving up general reading altogether?"

"You need not wholly give it up. You will not suffer by abridging it greatly for a time. You have been acquiring information at a rate which I suppose to be utterly disproportionate to your power of arranging

and using it. What you now require is discipline, not knowledge."

Archie sighed. "I fear," he said, "I have lost my chance."

"Nothing of the kind, my dear boy. Do not fall into the common mistake of the self-educated, who magnify their early disadvantages, 'underrate their havings, and overrate their doings.'"

"I cannot claim to be self-educated. In fact, I am not educated at all."

"Every one is educated in some sort or other; a tramp, or a thief, or even what they call a 'city arab.' Many a boy leaves Eton or Harrow with quite as little knowledge as you had when you went to business; and many a young man passes through the university with less real intellectual gain than you have picked up from your miscellaneous reading."

"It must be very greatly his own fault if he does."

"True; but the fault is not irreparable. It is still open to him, as to you or to any young man, to acquire all that is necessary for a useful and valuable life."

"Still, school and college have done

something for him ; at least they have made a gentleman of him," said Archie, with an undertone of bitterness.

"I will not say," returned Mr. Rutherford, "that your words are the echo of a vulgar error, since a gentleman, like a poet, is 'born, not made,' for I believe that would be a mischievous half-truth. No doubt fineness of perception, sensitiveness, is an inborn quality, and in general a note of race ; but it may be blunted by rough and careless usage, or educated to a yet keener temper. The artist's eye, the blind man's finger, show what training and practice can effect."

"That is what I think," said Archie. "Condemn the blind man early to rough, manual labour, and what will become of his delicacy of touch ?"

"That case is no parallel to yours. If you believe that all these years God has been educating you through the circumstances of your life, you must believe also that he has left no part of your nature to *irretrievable* loss and ruin ; that he means no capability wherewith he has endowed you to starve for lack of nourishment."

“I understand you,” said Archie. “There is a sense, of course, in which every true Christian is a gentleman.”

“Not *is* but ought to be, as he ought to be generous, unselfish, good-tempered.”

“In that sense, one of the rough lads in my class might be a truer gentleman than the Prince Regent or Louis XIV.—”

“Who was no gentleman at all, since he was discourteous, to the point of absolute cruelty, to the ladies of his family, and even to Madame de Maintenon. ‘From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he *seemeth to have*.’”

“But that would not make him—I mean my Sunday scholar, not Louis XIV.—feel at ease, and behave properly at your table, or in the society of ladies.”

“It would not teach him how people are accustomed to behave in such circumstances; but it would teach him to be kind and courteous, self-forgetting, yet self-respecting. Observation and experience would show him how to express these qualities in the conventional sign-language called manners. Thus, to one who knows the principles of universal grammar, it is a comparatively

easy task to learn the inflections of different languages. They are only various ways of saying the same thing. To return to your own case: I think you may lay it down as a general rule that no loss is irretrievable which has not been wilful. Whatever you really cannot have, is not necessary—not even good for you.”

“*Cannot?*”

“I use the word advisedly; for some good things are very hard to get, but proportionably worth the getting.”

“For example, the knowledge of Greek?”

“Just so. Understand me, Archer. I do not speak to you as to one whose lot in life is absolutely fixed. It *may* be God’s plan for you that you should keep a shop in a country town; but it may *not* be so. He may call you yet to other work—work ‘higher’ in the eyes of the world and of the Church too, whether so in His I cannot tell. Be ready. Train yourself. Let nothing that is in you be lost or neglected. Like the Israelites when they came out from Egypt, leave ‘not a hoof behind;’ for you cannot tell with what you must

serve your God, until he make known his will to you."

The return of the ladies and of Frank put an end to the conversation; but, as they parted, Mr. Rutherford said to his young kinsman, "Do not forget the Greek. Write to me in three months' time and tell me what you have done."

Next day, Archie received a parcel from the bookseller's, "with the Rev. Harry Rutherford's compliments." It contained a Greek New Testament, a grammar, and lexicon, and Archbishop Trench's "Greek Synonyms,"—a book eminently calculated to awaken interest in the study of that noble language.

V.

A CALL.

ARCHIE wrote punctually to Mr. Rutherford at the end of three months, and again at the end of six. He obtained some assistance in his new study from Mr. Prout, whom he was now beginning really to like. But about that time Mr. Prout received an invitation to a larger ministerial sphere in Manchester. He hoped to induce Kate Lyndon to share his new home in the city; and Archie, convinced at last that Kate loved him, was not unwilling that it should be so. The parting (which nevertheless he felt keenly) was just over, and Kate no longer an inmate of his uncle's home, when he remembered that his third quarterly epistle was due to Mr. Rutherford.

He retired one evening to his own room to write it undisturbed; for a letter was

always rather a formidable undertaking to him, and he felt a very strong desire to stand well with Mr. Rutherford. He had just reached "yours gratefully," and was about to sign his name with a feeling of satisfaction, when his uncle's voice called him hastily.

As he came down Mr. Morris beckoned him into the parlour, and with a very grave face put a newspaper into his hand, indicating a name in the list of deaths. Archie read: "On Saturday, the 31st of March, at Bex, in Switzerland, Francis, third son of the Rev. Harry Rutherford, rector of Stainton, —shire, aged 18."

In as few words as he might, he answered the questions of his uncle and aunt:—Was not that the boy who had come to see him last summer? Had he done with school? Had he been intended for the Church? Was he the youngest? What did Archie suppose had brought him to Switzerland?—Sad at heart, and sick of what seemed to him idle, empty words, he went back to his own room. It was no shame to his manhood if tears filled his eyes as he thought of the bright-faced, pleasant lad

he had seen so lately in the fulness of health and vigour, and of his father's joy and pride in him.

By-and-by the remembrance came to him of what Mr. Rutherford had told him about Frank's future, and the work to which he wished to devote his life. Had not the Master only called him to higher service in another place? With *him*, indeed, it was well—nay, “far better.” The sad thoughts that could not be repressed, the tears that could not be restrained, were for the living, not for the dead.

Next morning Archie tore up his useless letter, and penned in its stead another, containing these words only:—

“DEAR SIR,—God has given him the desire of his heart, and has not denied him the request of his lips. He desired to serve Him, and now he is, for evermore, where His servants serve Him, where they see His face, and His name is in their foreheads. God comfort you, and his mother, and all the mourners.—Yours, in respectful sympathy,

“ARCHER E. LYNDON.”

He received no answer, and he expected none; but a local newspaper, addressed to him evidently by some member of the family, communicated details of mournful interest. Frank had been enjoying a Continental tour, between the close of his school and the beginning of his university career. A daring mountaineer, he had met with an accident in scaling some height hitherto unconquered, had been brought back in sensible by his companions and the guides, and died the next day. It seemed to Archie a sore aggravation of the parents' sorrow that this cherished son should leave them without farewell word or look—should die

“ With eyes turned away,
And no last word to say.”

But, on the other hand, there was no aching uncertainty, no torturing balance of hope and fear about the tremendous interests of the unseen world. The witness of that young life had been clear and consistent. Archie did not talk much about Frank Rutherford, but he told his story one Sunday to his boys. There were some tearful eyes, and Willie Maxwell said

earnestly, "I'd *like* to live like that, sir—ready any minute to go up to heaven."

Willie was now usually called "Maxwell," for he had been promoted to the important post of light porter in Mr. Morris's establishment. Archer was looked upon by every one as his patron, and considered answerable for any slight peccadilloes of which he might be guilty,—fortunately there were no serious ones.

About three months after the death of Frank, Archer received a brief note from Mr. Rutherford, intimating a wish to see him. If it were convenient to his uncle to give him a holiday, so much the better; but if not, he could at all events come to Stainton on Saturday evening and remain until Monday.

Useful as Archer now was to his uncle, Morris was considerate, and gave him from Saturday until the following Wednesday.

Archer's holiday was a pleasant one. There is something singularly attractive in the atmosphere of peaceful activity, of sober cheerfulness, that pervades an English rectory, when the pastor is a true shepherd of souls, and his household one with him

in heart and aim. Although a deep cloud of sorrow rested over this home, it did not wholly exclude the light, nor was its presence very apparent to superficial observers. Black dresses and a certain quietness of aspect and demeanour marked the sadness of the mother and the sisters, but they went in and out as usual upon their errands of mercy; and in Mr. Rutherford himself Archie noted scarcely any change, except that his hair had grown perceptibly gray. All took pains to make the young townsman enjoy his brief visit to the country. Fortunately for him the weather was glorious, and the month was June, the "meadow month" of our Saxon forefathers.

On Monday Mr. Rutherford gave him what he called "a grind" in Greek, and expressed himself satisfied, even a little surprised, at his progress. On Tuesday evening, as he returned from his last stroll over dewy meadows and between blossoming hedgerows, Mr. Rutherford met him in the porch, and motioned him to follow him into his study.

Having given him a seat, he opened his

desk, took out a photograph, and handed it to him. "I think you will value it," he said in a voice a little lower than his wont; "the likeness is good."

"I do indeed, sir—thank you," returned Archer, looking with emotion on the pictured form of Frank Rutherford.

"I believe I told you," Mr. Rutherford continued after a pause, "what was his purpose, had God seen fit to spare his life."

"To be a missionary?"

"Yes. It was the will of God to have one labourer the less in his vineyard here, one more above. For, where he is gone, 'his servants serve him,'—as you reminded me. Yet, perhaps, there need not be one the less, even here. It is in my heart to send forth, in the place of my boy, another, whose work may be as his work, and whose triumphs and successes may be as his also—'baptized for the dead,' as they used to say of old. The silver and the gold laid by to complete my boy's education, will train his substitute, and raise thereby, to Frank Rutherford, a better and more enduring monument than marble bust or painted window."

He paused. Archer was silent too, but his whole heart went forth to this bereaved father in the strength of his loving purpose that his dead son's work should yet be fulfilled, though by another hand.

"Archer Lyndon," Mr. Rutherford said at last, "will *you* help me?"

"I, sir? How?"

"Will you go in Frank's place?"

Archer could not answer. A thrill of mingled awe and rapture passed through him, body, soul, and spirit. So might have felt the mystic seer by the waters of Babylon when he saw the flash of starry pinions, and quivered to the touch of "the man Gabriel," caused to fly swiftly in answer to his prayer. Not uttered prayers alone, but all the deep, unspoken breathings of Archer Lyndon's soul, seemed now to meet him face to face; the passion of his boyhood for the lot of the wanderer, the passion of his manhood for the lot of the labourer in God's vineyard. But for that manhood, he could have lifted up his voice and wept.

"Well, Archie?" Mr. Rutherford questioned gently, when already the silence had lasted long.

“I fear,” said Archie, in a voice low with deep emotion—“I fear I am not fit.”

“Spiritually, morally, and intellectually, I believe, you are, and I have studied you far more carefully than you think. Technically, the Church Missionary College will supply your lack; and you shall go there as soon as arrangements can be made, due regard, of course, being had to your uncle’s convenience. At present I only want your answer to my proposal.”

Archie put aside the hand that shaded his face and looked in that of his kinsman, his eyes kindling with courage, hope, and energy. “No answer is possible save one—I thank God and you; and with God’s good help I will labour so that hereafter I may rejoice with him into whose work I am entering.”

VI.

CONCLUSION.

YEARS more than a few have come and gone, fraught with their inevitable burden of change. Suns have risen and set; joys have bloomed and faded; many a cherished hope has withered, like an untimely blossom, and fallen fruitless to the ground, whilst some have found their fruition beyond the wildest dream of the heart that gave them birth. Have these kept the secret of their early sweetness? Which is better after all—the star-gemmed bough of spring, or the heavy-laden bough of autumn?

There is one person, at least, who has no doubt upon the subject. Archer Lyndon has had every early dream fulfilled, and has found the fulfilment “very good.” Looking backwards, onwards, and upwards,

he can say, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

It may be that, looked at from a worldly point of view, the heritage of the humble missionary in the Friendly Isles might not have seemed so "goodly." Yet, even the most worldly of habitual dwellers in cities and palaces must have been fain to own that Archer Lyndon's lot was cast in a pleasant place. A paradise of beauty and sweetness surrounded his simple dwelling ; the purple convolvulus, the white wild bean, the red flowering ginger, and many another blossom unknown to northern climates, spread out their beauty beneath the shade of the graceful cocoa-palm, the broad-leaved bread-fruit, the crimson-flowered hibiscus tree. Far in the distance, upon the coral reef, might be heard the never-ceasing roar of the breakers—"breakers that never touched the shore," so often dreamed of in his boyhood.

Both the missionary's dwelling and the little church and school-house near it had arisen, like Solomon's temple, without sound of hammer ; for the modest wooden struc-

tures contained not a single nail. Native hands, loving and grateful hands, had bound together their beams and rafters with cocoanut fibres stained in various colours, and curiously wrought and finished with ingenious decorative patterns. The effect was charming; and now that, on a fine afternoon, the cocoa mat that served as a door to the dwelling-house was withdrawn, the glimpse afforded of the interior harmoniously completed the picture. A low seat was occupied by an English lady, in a simple print dress suited to the climate, and with a shady hat of palm leaves lying near her. At her feet a very pretty native girl was sitting, her garments of white "tappa" setting off the rich brown of her shapely arms and neck, and yet another contrast, strange but becoming, between her soft, dark eyes, shaded by long lashes, darker still, and her clustering curls of golden hair.* She was eagerly pouring some story into the sympathizing ear of the missionary's

* This peculiarity in the appearance of natives of the Friendly Isles is produced by artificial means, the hair being dyed with a preparation of lime. Travellers tell us the effect is extremely picturesque. See "The Cruise of the *Challenger*," by Lord George Campbell.

wife, who soothed her with gentle words and touches. The kind, thoughtful face bending over her was the face of Edith Lyndon, formerly Edith Rutherford.

A tall, athletic Englishman, black-haired and black-bearded, approached the cottage with long strides. "Well, Maxwell?" said Mrs. Lyndon, looking up, and laying at the same time a detaining hand upon the girl, who showed an inclination to dart away and hide.

"Beg pardon, ma'am; where is the master?" asked that faithful henchman and "armour-bearer," who had accompanied Archer Lyndon to the world's end, and still, as in old days, tried to "do all that was in his heart."

"Mr. Lyndon is in the school-house, I think. Is anything wrong?"

"Mr. Edwards is very ill, and wants to see him. No time to lose, I should say."

Mr. Edwards belonged to a class of Englishmen often to be found in far-away places, beyond the pale of the civilized world. He had amassed a large fortune in one of the Fiji Islands, but lost most of it in a miniature though desperate war

with the natives, whose savage lawlessness left at that time no security for life or property. Gathering the remains of his wealth, he escaped to the nearest island of the "Friendly" group, where he lived for two or three years, a solitary, disappointed man, taking refuge from his troubles in the sensual enjoyments that delightful climate seems particularly to invite. Not only did he reject all friendly advances from the missionaries, but he assumed an attitude of active hostility towards them. He did everything in his power to injure their work, telling the natives that the wisest men in England had ceased to believe their stories; and, what was practically much more mischievous, supplying them with arrack and other intoxicating drinks. More than once had Lyndon sought his presence in order to expostulate; but Edwards persistently refused to see him, and carefully avoided even the most casual rencontre. All the more remarkable was this summons to his bed-side.

Lyndon received the message and stepped into the house for a moment to get some

medicines which he thought might prove useful. "I do not know how long I may be detained," he said to his wife. "Go on with everything as though I were here. Poor Edwards! he must be ill indeed, or he would not send for me."

A walk of three or four miles brought him to the Englishman's house, which was built like his own, in native fashion, but was much larger and more pretentious. It had a veranda, where several persons, of various nationalities and doubtful character, lounged about, chatting and smoking. Some one guided him to the apartment where the sick man lay on a mat of cocoa-nut fibre. A native girl was fanning him, but withdrew at a sign from her master. Lyndon gazed with deep compassion on the wasted form, the hollow cheeks, and the sunken eyes of his former opponent, and his first words were an expression of genuine sympathy.

"Before we speak of other matters," he said, "tell me whether I can be of any use to you in a medical capacity. Such skill as I possess is altogether at your service."

"No, thank you," the sick man answered.

“I know my disease—its symptoms, its progress, and its end. Years ago, I went to Melbourne for advice, and was told that if I continued my present mode of life, that life would not be a long one. Arrack is a good servant, but a bad master—especially in these climates. I make no complaint; I have only myself to thank. Stay,” he added, as Lyndon seemed about to speak; “I counted the cost when I sent for you, and made up my mind to listen to a sermon. So I will, but not yet. I have a few words first to say to you about the affairs of this world in which we can both agree. Archer Edward Lyndon, though you do not know me, I know you very well.”

Lyndon looked at him more attentively than he had ever done before. But that face, well tanned by Southern suns, and now showing the livid hue of approaching death through its tawny brown, touched no chord of remembrance in his soul.

The sick man went on: “For many years I have called myself simply Edwards, but my true name is Edward Lyndon.”

“Lyndon? my uncle?” cried Archer, in great surprise.

“The same. Do you remember our short acquaintance in London, more than twenty years ago? *I* do, as if it were yesterday. I can see you now, a lank, uncouth slip of a lad, half-boy, half-man,—a very great fool, but a fool with a will of his own. You have grown a finer man than I could have thought,—scarce a trace of the old Archie in you. Well, every man must ‘dree his weird,’ as my old Scotch nurse used to say; and plainly it was yours to travel to the world’s end. But you might as well have gone out with me upon a reasonable errand, instead of wasting your life trying to turn good Tongans into bad Englishmen. I always thought, and I still think, you are spinning ropes of sand. I made up my mind, the first hour I came here, not to recognize you; but blood is thicker than water, and now that I have to part with the little those man-eating rascals in Fiji left with me, I had rather you had it than a stranger. Stoop lower; one never knows who may be within ear-shot, and I have got a precious lot of loafers about me here.”

Archer found himself obliged to listen

to certain details, which the dying man gave him with remarkable vigour and energy. But he assured him that he had no wish to profit by the remains of his wealth; and when his uncle insisted that he "would liefer it went to his own blood," he reminded him of the claims of his sister, whose family was larger than her means. Eventually the business was settled, to the advantage of a youthful Archer Lyndon Prout, who was growing up in a quiet English home.

Then Archer said earnestly, "I do not greatly care for these things, dear uncle, but I care for *you*. How is it with you now? In the old days you did not believe in Christ, and you have given me every reason to think you unchanged. Now that death is near, how can you do without him?"

"As others do. What is there to be afraid of?"

"Ay, *what?* You may say you believe death is the end of all, but you know that you do not *quite* believe it, not from your very heart."

The sick man moved uneasily, and a look

of anxiety, of distress, almost of terror, shot from beneath his quivering eyelids. "I — doubt — *everything*," he murmured slowly.

Well did Archer know that there was no possible help for this world-hardened unbeliever save in Him to whom he was wont to direct the childlike hearts of his island neophytes. But how could he convince him of this? How could he make the blind to see? He could not do it at all; he could only try to awaken within him such a longing for the gift of sight as might "wring from out his heart a cry" to One who could bestow it. "I understand you," he said. "You feel that the grave is very dark, that death is a great mystery. You are 'going whence you shall not return, even to a land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.'"

"That's just it," said Edward Lyndon, half raising himself, and clinching his hand in his earnestness. "That's the truth. I am what I don't know, and I'm going

where I don't know. I understand nothing at all; but the thing I understand least, and find it hardest to be sure of, is that I—I myself—can ever come to be nothing at all."

"The 'land of darkness' would be as dark to all of us as it is to you, but for One who went thither himself, and came back again to tell of it."

"Old wives' fables."

"As much so as the victories of Alexander the Great or the death of Julius Cæsar."

"Those kind of things are denied by nobody."

"Because they matter little practically to anybody. Suppose it otherwise—suppose tremendous living interests to hang upon them—you would soon see a formidable and plausible host of arguments brought to bear against the plainest facts of history, enough to overthrow the faith of all who preferred not to believe, and it may be of others as well."

"My time for argument has gone by for ever, and my strength too."

"That word would be a very sad one

were this a case for argument alone. But it is not with a proposition you have to deal; it is with a Person."

"Still, my dear nephew, you must prove the existence of the Person; you must show me that he is."

"I could prove that in many different ways, were you able to listen to me. There are proofs of many kinds, moral and historical, direct and indirect; but these, for your present need, are too slow and too difficult. For you the simplest plan is the best. Did you doubt the existence of any person now alive—of my sister, for instance, of whom I have been telling you—I should satisfy your doubts by putting you into communication with her."

"Too far away. She could not come to me, or even send a letter. I should be dead first."

"Happily He of whose existence I want to convince you, that you may also know his goodness and his mercy, is not far away. He can come to you, and he has sent you a letter; nay, more, you can speak to him, and he will answer you. I entreat of you to hear his words, and to join

with me in asking him to visit you with his grace."

"That is not unreasonable. At all events, stay with me awhile. I have no one about me here whom I can trust. You can send a messenger over to your place—a dozen if you like it. Now I am tired, but by-and-by you shall talk with me again. After all, as I have said, you are my own flesh and blood, and I have been a fool to set myself against you since I came here. But we are all fools, more or less. Indeed, what is life itself but one great folly?"

Thus it happened that, until the end came, Archer Lyndon gave the mornings and evenings (often, too, part of the night) to his uncle, while the days were occupied with his missionary work. Edward Lyndon lived long enough to breathe a few words, less sad and hopeless, into his listening ear; but the close of a life spent in the service of sin and self is seldom tinged with the bright hues of spiritual joy and triumph—perhaps it ought not so to be. Enough, if present rest be found for the weary heart, and humble self-renouncing hope be cherished for the future. This much was given

to Edward Lyndon before he passed away. Very thankful was Archer, as he laid his dead beneath a cocoa-palm, far away from the quiet churchyard beyond the sea where their kindred slept, to think that this grave also was hallowed by the blessed hope of a Christian immortality.

Here, then, we part from Archer Lyndon. We can proceed no further with the story of his life, because that story is not finished yet; and so the fragments of it that have been given must remain as fragments, and nothing more. But, in reality, what story is finished? Death itself only leaves half the page a blank, upon which the great Artist writes with his own hand, "To be continued."

A CHILD'S VICTORY.



I.

THE LITTLE WATCHER.

ON a sultry summer's day, seven hundred years ago, a little girl stood at a street door in one of the close, narrow alleys of a Flemish town. Her dress indicated poverty, though not neglect. Other children were playing near; she heard their voices, and looked at them for a few moments with curiosity and interest in her large blue eyes, but apparently with no wish to join their sports. Far more earnestly did she gaze to the right, where the long alley terminated in a broader street, from whence there poured a stream of intensely vivid sunlight, illuminating a corner of the shaded alley, with the Madonna in her niche, as well as the quaint

carvings that adorned the house of rich Messer Andreas the weaver. What would little Arlette have given to see *one* figure that she knew turn from the sunshine into the shadow! Young as she was, she had already learned one of woman's saddest lessons--the meaning of that word *watching*.

"Child, where art thou?" moaned a faint voice from within.

In another instant she stood by the bedside of her dying mother. All too surely had Death, that great king, sealed those wasted features with his own signet, that the purpose might not be changed concerning her; yet, to judge by the calm that overspread them, he was in this instance no king of terrors--no king, but a servant rather, a herald of the "King immortal, invisible," sent from his presence to summon one of his children home.

"Thou seest no one, child?"

"No, mother. To-morrow--perhaps to-morrow he will come."

But childhood's faith in to-morrow failed to communicate itself to the dying woman.

"No one," she continued, without heeding the words of Arlette--"no one; and it is

well. Though long and sore has been the conflict, I can now say it is well. My child, when *he* comes, tell him we shall meet above. Tell him that I waited—waited just to look in his face once more, and to say good-bye; but now the call has come, and I must go. As for thee—” She paused, and a look of exhaustion passed over her face. The little girl, who did not weep, but maintained the quiet self-possession of an older person, held to her lips a cup containing some simple cordial.

“Arlette, I must ask thee a hard thing; wilt thou do it for me?” She raised herself slightly, and fixed her dark eyes earnestly on the sorrowing child.

“Mother, I will do anything—anything.”

“My child, listen to me—look in my face, and tell me that if I grow worse, as it must be, thou wilt not fear.”

“Fear what, my own mother?”

“Fear to stand thus beside me quite alone—thy hand in mine—none other with us save the great God above, who is with us always.”

Arlette did not speak; her face was very pale, and her lips were compressed.

“Promise me, child of my heart, promise

me that, happen what may, thou wilt call no one, bring no one here."

Arlette looked up quickly. "Save our good neighbour, the Vrow Cristine, who hath been so kind and helpful to us?"

"No, child; not even Cristine. Thou canst not understand. And yet perchance thou canst, for Sorrow hath been thy teacher, and she teaches well and quickly. If Cristine comes to sit beside me when I lie senseless, she will say within herself, 'Now I can fetch the priest, and make all right for my poor neighbour.' And he will come and pray his blasphemous prayers, and pour his useless oil upon my brow; and then, Arlette, we shall have touched the accursed thing, and when thy father knows it, it will break his heart."

Arlette did not answer immediately. She stood pale and motionless, her eyes fixed on her mother's face. At last she said, in a low, resolved tone,—

"That shall never be, mother." And as she spoke, the self-command so unnatural for her years gave way, and with true childlike sorrow she wept and wailed, "Mother! mother!"

“Poor child ! poor little one !” said the mother soothingly.

The child soon conquered her tears and sobs, and sat down quietly in the dark corner beside her mother’s couch ; but her frame still quivered with suppressed emotion. What a long, long day it was, and how unlike any other day in her brief experience of life ! Her mother slumbered uneasily from time to time, and would then talk of strange things that she could not understand—sometimes speaking to the absent father as if he were near her, and again wailing feebly that he would not come. But happily for Arlette, these wanderings, which filled her with terror, did not continue. As evening drew on, the dying woman lay calm and still, and at last sleep came ; not like the feverish slumbers of the day, but quiet and restful, “as if upon the spirit worn distilled some healing balm.”

The little watcher kept her place, from which, for some hours, she had only moved to smooth her mother’s pillow, or to bring a cooling draught to her lips. And now she feared to disturb her by a motion or a breath.

The kind-hearted Cristine, wife of their

neighbour the fuller, came to the door with inquiries, which Arlette answered in a low voice.

“She sleeps, sayest thou?” said the hearty, good-natured Vrow, in a tolerably loud whisper, and pushing the door a little more open. “Poor child! art thou not lonely and afraid? Let me come in and sit with thee awhile.”

In her heart Arlette longed to accept the proffered companionship, but mindful of her promise she declined it firmly though gratefully.

“Is there nought I can do for thee? Wouldst thou not have me call the leech? He is a good man, and right friendly to the poor. Bless thee, child, if thy mother feared to summon him because she had little to give, Messer Franz would rather leave a mark behind him with such as thou, than take it from thee.”

“He hath been here,” returned Arlette sadly; “he came this morning, and said there was nothing more that he could do now.”

“Ah, I see;” and as softly as she could the good woman stepped into the room.

When she beheld the white still face on the pillow, the expression of her own changed, and she sighed and shook her head. She spoke again to Arlette, but without looking at her. "My little one, it were well, methinks, to fetch the holy father, that he may pray beside her, and do what is right for her poor soul. There, there," seeing that she looked pale and frightened: "I did not mean to grieve thee; but we must think of the soul that has to live for ever."

"My father is coming home," said the child timidly; "we must wait for him."

"Thy father!" repeated Vrow Cristine in some surprise. "God grant he may come; but, my poor child—" "There is one nigh that will not wait for him," she was about to add, but unwillingness to terrify Arlette kept her silent.

After making her promise to call her if she needed help, she withdrew, to consult with her husband whether they might not take her to their own home, when a few short hours had made her an orphan.

Meanwhile the light of the long summer day began to fade, and in the dusk Arlette trembled with vague terror. All the familiar

objects in the little room looked strange and ghastly in the uncertain twilight ; and when she turned from them to gaze at the dear face on the pillow, gleaming white through the darkness, *that* too seemed changed. Was it indeed her mother—her own mother, that she loved, and from whom she had never been separated ? Would she not speak to her, look at her again ? Was she— ? she could not for worlds have uttered the word that was in her thoughts ; her heart almost stood still in its terror, and she bowed her head, and hid her face in the coverlet, not in sorrow only, but in fear—an awful fear, that seemed to oppress her like a heavy weight, and stifled in its birth a cry that had almost passed her lips unawares.

Beyond utterance was the sense of relief with which she heard footsteps, and supposed the kind Vrow Cristine was coming once more to offer help and companionship. Surely, just for a little while, she might let her stay. “ But no,” she thought immediately ; “ it is a man’s footstep—belike it is the fuller, Cristine’s husband.” Any one would have been welcome now—any one save, perhaps, a dark-robed priest.

It was neither priest, nor fuller, nor physician. A few hasty strides brought into the room a tall, gaunt man, long-robed, and with wooden sandals, to whose arms Arlette sprang with a passionate cry—"My father! my father!"

II.

THE EARLY CHOICE.

ON the evening of the next day, Robert the Wanderer (for such was the name by which Arlette's father was generally known) sat in that little room, as silent and nearly as motionless as the form that, draped in spotless white, lay on the couch before him. His eye might have rested at the same moment upon the treasure God had recalled and the treasure He had still left him ; for Arlette, worn out by watching and by tears, had sunk to sleep beside her mother, the warm cheek of the living almost touching the cold features of the dead. Life and death, though so often intertwined in this strange world of ours, do not often, in the outward and visible signs of their presence, come into contact so close with each other. Yet it was a fair picture ; for the dead face,

though sharp and wasted, had its own sad beauty, and it wore, besides, that expression of repose like nothing else on earth—that expression which seems to say, “ Nothing more can trouble me now. Though I look so near, I am infinitely far away ; the link uniting me to earth is severed.” And though that look so filled the watcher’s eye and heart that they scarce had room for aught else, yet even he might have turned to the lovely child, lying where she had sobbed herself to sleep, her golden hair half-shading the innocent face, so soft and round, though unnaturally pale with sorrow and anxiety. Robert *did* look on her long and thoughtfully : in mourning for the dead he mourned also for the living. Bitter self-reproach mingled with his sorrow, and it may be there was some ground for the feeling, though not so much as in the anguish of his first hour of bereavement he fancied. In explanation of this, it will be necessary to sketch his past life, and hers who had just been taken from him.

Robert the Wanderer was the son of a prosperous tradesman of Ghent ; his father destined him for the Church, and being nat-

urally studious and thoughtful, he gladly acquiesced in the plan. He had nearly completed the necessary course of preparation, when he formed the acquaintance of a stranger from southern Germany, an earnest, eloquent man, resembling in his dress a wandering monk, yet with some differences; in his manners simple, austere, and grave, and speaking of invisible realities as one who had felt their power. With this friend (who, in truth, belonged to the sect then called the *Cathari*), young Robert held long conferences, and finally borrowed from him his most precious treasure—a manuscript copy of the Gospels, which he usually kept concealed beneath his robe of dark serge. In his lonely chamber the student perused this volume, and often he wept and prayed over its contents in sorrowful perplexity until the night was far advanced. For all the ideas of his childhood and youth had received a mighty shock; from the conversations of his friend and the lessons of his book he began to suspect that the vast superstructure which he called the “Church” was built upon a shifting foundation of sand. God gave him courage and honesty (it was

no small gift) not at this point to close the book and to stifle the misgivings that tortured his soul, but rather steadfastly to resolve that he would sift this matter to the bottom, that he would follow on to know the truth, and then abide in it. Thus the distinguishing tenets of Romanism—purgatory, penance, image-worship, invocation of saints, justification by works—were one by one loosened and cast off from his spirit, “like worn-out fetters.”

But then arose the question, So much cast away, what should he retain as truth? Was *all* faith superstition? Was certainty impossible to man? Was he indeed doomed to doubt and perplexity, or might he somewhere discover a “great rock foundation,” upon which he might safely build his hopes of immortality?

It has been truly said, that “when the mortal, in the moment between his first sigh and his last smile, between the lightning of life and the thunder of death, finds his Christ, he is already at the goal and has lived enough.” Some such feeling, though he could not have so defined it, filled the soul of Robert, when the light from the

Sun that never sets broke over him at last ; or, in other words, when he found in the person of Christ all that his nature needed—truth to satisfy his intellect, love to fill his heart. He accepted Christ as his Saviour, his Guide, and his Teacher, relying on the promise, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” And thus following, he was taught to choose the good and to refuse the evil—*good* meaning with him that which sprang from Christ as its centre and led to him as its end, and *evil* being all that came from self or terminated in self. His friend aided him by his counsels and his prayers, and rejoiced with him when he found light and peace. “And now,” he said, as Robert joyfully confessed his faith, “what wilt thou *do*, my friend ?”

The young disciple was not prepared with an answer to this inquiry ; it had not, indeed, occurred to him that any particular course of action was a necessary consequence of his change. But as he pondered, he felt that it would now be impossible for him to live as he would otherwise have done, and that he must choose his part, or else prove

a traitor to Him whom he loved and desired to serve. Kneeling in his chamber, he prayed: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And events, which Pascal calls "masters sent to us from the hand of God," answered the question for him. His absence from the rites of the Church brought him under suspicion; he was questioned by his family, and felt himself obliged to avow his faith. "Heresy" was then a new and strange phenomenon to the good people of Ghent, but they regarded it with vague horror; and to save his life, the suspected one was forced to fly. In company with his friend the German missionary, Robert quitted his native city for ever, and determined to devote the remainder of his life to the task of imparting the truths he had found so precious. "As a son with a father," he laboured with his aged companion in the gospel; passing from town to town and from village to village sowing the good seed, "here a little, and there a little."

After some years, he chanced to become acquainted at Bruges with a man who proved to be a native of his own city, and also a

fellow-craftsman and friend of his father's. While travelling homewards with his family, this man had been detained at Bruges by an infectious fever, one of those pestilences which so often walked on their silent deadly way through the ill-cleansed and ill-ventilated alleys of the mediæval cities. His wife and two sons fell victims to the disorder; and not long afterwards the broken-hearted father followed them to the grave, not, however, until, through the teaching of Robert, he was enabled to rejoice in a hope full of immortality. A fair and gentle girl was thus left the sole survivor of the family. Friendless and unprotected in a strange city, what could she do but weep and pray that, if the prayer were not a sinful one, she might soon be permitted to rejoin her parents! She had, it is true, some relatives in Ghent, but the short journey was then more formidable, more impracticable for a lonely girl, than a voyage to the ends of the earth would be in the present day. Robert showed unwearied kindness, and sought in every way to aid and comfort her; and from the compassion that prompted these efforts the transition to a different sentiment is proverbially

easy. He might, if he had so desired, have found means to send her safely to her friends in Ghent ; but another course of action occurred to his mind, which he so far preferred that he found no difficulty in persuading himself that he ought to adopt it. No vow bound him ; the laws of Rome forbidding to marry he regarded as vain traditions of men, and considered the strongest ties of human affection by no means inconsistent with his calling as a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord. Would that he had remembered, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, that although all things were lawful to him, all things were not expedient. There has been controversy enough in the Christian Church over the words of warning and advice addressed by the same inspired writer to believing men and women, but, like all other Scripture words, they are simple and plain to those to whom they are addressed ; and it needs only a due consideration of times and circumstances to elucidate what seems difficult and obscure. Robert, the wanderer and the outcast, who knew not, and must never know, the true meaning of the word *home*, needed no other commentary upon the declaration,

“Such shall have trouble in the flesh,” than that supplied by the short sad life of her who lay before him in her shroud. True, if those pale lips could once more have been unclosed, they would have said that the missionary’s wife had been happier even in distress and danger, in manifold perplexities and anxieties, than had she possessed all the wealth and enjoyment that earth could give; true, that sometimes when his heart was cast down within him, he had been told so with loving words and looks, of which the remembrance almost brought a tear to his burning eyelids. At another hour he would feel and understand that this was indeed but the simple truth, but now his heart was too sorrowful to be just to itself; and forgetting the joy they two had had together, and even the blessed knowledge he had been privileged to impart to his beloved one, he only remembered the perils into which he had drawn her, and the many cares she had endured for him, which perchance had shortened as well as embittered her life.

And the living link that still remained between him and the dead—his child, his precious, beautiful child—as he gazed on

her sleeping form, his trouble "did not pass, but grew;" the clouds of sorrow waxed darker and darker around him. Arlette, the missionary's child, was not wanted in the world! Well would it be if she joined her mother in that home where there are "many mansions," for elsewhere there seemed to be no place for her.

The kind Vrow Cristine, when she came into the darkened room that morning to perform the last sad offices for the departed, had indeed more than hinted that the child was welcome to share the home and the bread of her little ones, as long as her father wished; but how could he consent to this? How could he surrender her to the care of those who professed a soul-destroying faith, of those whose mistaken kindness would lead them to induce her to submit to influences which he regarded with abhorrence the most intense? Rather a thousand times would he see her laid in the grave beside her mother, than thus peril the interests of her immortal soul. Another alternative remained; he considered it long and anxiously, and finally resolved that, with God's good help, he would embrace it.

“Arlette, my child, awake ; thou hast slumbered long enough.”

The little sleeper started, and looked up ; it was her father’s voice that spoke, and her father’s form that bent lovingly over her. Her first sensation was one of joy at his return.

“Yes,” she thought, “he is here indeed, the long-watched-for, the beloved ! He will not leave us again ; we are safe now in his care—*we !*”

In a moment all the anguish of the past came over her, and she knew too surely that her mother was no more.

“Mother ! mother !” was the cry that arose from the depths of her heart, as weeping, sobbing, shivering, she threw herself upon the dead. Tenderly and silently her father raised her, clasped her in his strong arms, and held her close to his heart. There at last the passion of her grief spent itself, and she grew calm, though almost exhausted. She began to observe his dress, the room, the shadows on the wall, and, in a weary, half-listless way, to wonder why he did not weep too. With an effort she raised herself a little, and looked up in his face. It was

white and rigid, and terrible as the face of one who has seen a horror he can never reveal and never forget. Years must go over Arlette ere she could even comprehend the great agony he had passed through since he entered that chamber four and twenty hours before.

But as he spoke to her, and in a low quiet voice, the dread she felt vanished quite away before the dear familiar tones, which seemed gentler than ever. He said, "By-and-by I will bring thee to thy friend Vrow Cristine; thou shalt stay with her to-night."

"Why so, father? I would rather stay with thee."

"Not now, my child. I have—I have work to do." The words were spoken with an evident effort, and the strong man trembled.

"Bid farewell to Cristine and to thy little playfellows, Arlette, for to-morrow thou shalt go hence with me."

She looked up with surprise and interest.

"Yes, my poor child; God has left us two alone in the world, and with his good help nothing but death shall part us."

"And wilt thou take me with thee to

the strange lands where thou goest, my father?"

"Even so. It will be a rough, uncertain life for such as thou; but if love and care can make it easy to thee, God knows they shall not fail. Thou art my sole treasure now;" and a burning tear fell on the child's forehead. With childhood's art she answered by a kiss. Carefully instructed in the Scriptures, it was not unnatural that the story of Ruth should occur to her at the moment.

"I will be thy Ruth to thee, father," she said softly. "'Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge.'"

"And thy father's God shall be thine, my precious child."

"There is more in the verse, father; let me say it all. 'Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried.'"

"God forbid!" escaped almost involuntarily from the lips of Robert. But he added, a moment afterwards, "Yet his will be done; he knoweth what is best for thee and me."

After a short interval, the good-natured face of Cristine appeared at the door. "So please you, neighbour, I have come for the

child," she said; "and my husband hath summoned thy friend, as thou desiredst. He will be here anon."

"God reward thee, my kind friend," replied Robert heartily, as he took her hand.

The good woman hesitated for a moment, and then said, in a tone of mild, almost deferential expostulation: "I know well, Master Robert, that thou art a wise man, and I am only a simple woman. Still the neighbours will talk amongst themselves even if I keep silence; and in good sooth, master, 'twould be hard to disprove what they whisper, when never a priest—"

"No more of this *now*, good Cristine, as thou pitiest my sorrow," Robert interrupted. "But ere I leave this place, for leave it I must to-morrow, if I may I would fain talk for an hour with thee and thy husband."

"And right welcome, neighbour.—Now, my pretty one, come with me; the children have wanted thee all day."

"Father, dear father," whispered Arlette, "may I not stay?"

"It cannot be, my child. Go now with Cristine; I will come for thee very early to-morrow, I promise it."

Thanks to the strong habit of obedience, Arlette almost instinctively, and without a perceptible effort, put her hand within Cristine's, and quietly left the room. Had she guessed *why* they wished her to go, not so calmly would she have turned away, without even one last look at the face of the dead. Yet it was better thus—better that she should be spared the agonizing farewell, the bitter parting with the precious dust, even though the empty room looked so strangely cold and desolate next morning, and the sad surprise cost her more tears than she had ever wept before.

III.

THE FIERY TRIAL.

ALL through the long summer day the rain poured heavily and without intermission. Not far from what was even then the flourishing city of Cologne, but in a very lonely spot, which could be reached only by intricate by-paths, stood a deserted and partly ruined barn. Its desolate appearance, and the silence that reigned undisturbed during the day-time, together with the unfrequency of light streaming through its windows in hours of darkness, would have given rise to no suspicions that it was used as a dwelling-place. Such, however, was the case, although on the day of which we are about to speak its only occupant was our little friend Arlette. She is one year older than when she watched beside her dying mother; but if we “measure not by months or years,” but by

that "life of the soul" which some thinkers tell us not only measures but constitutes time,* it may be said that an age has passed since then over that young child's head. She has mourned her mother, not alone as some children mourn, with sudden, sharp gushes of sorrow, but also with quiet inner thoughts and silent tears, an utter loneliness stealing over her sometimes amidst her play, or when she looked at beautiful scenes or places, or even when she felt very happy. For she was still a child, and not seldom a happy and playful child. Her father's watchful love had shielded her as much as possible from the dangers and hardships of their wandering life; and for a thoughtful and imaginative nature like hers, that life had its own peculiar and exquisite enjoyments. Even the necessity of passing whole days in solitude did not press very heavily upon her. There were weary and sorrowful hours, but there were many bright ones too; for she belonged to that class of children who can surround themselves at pleasure with a fairy world of their own creation. As she sits

* "Time is the life of the soul. If not this, then tell me what it is?"—LONGFELLOW'S *Hyperion*.

on a bench in a corner of that strange and rude dwelling, she busies herself with a goodly heap of field-flowers, gathered on the previous day before the rain had begun to fall. She does not merely arrange them, nor does she throw them aimlessly about as children so often do ; they are rather her playfellows than her playthings : she talks to them, with them, for them ; invests them with ideal characters, makes them the heroes and heroines of a little drama, which, to judge by her earnest face and kindling eyes, she is acting out with intense interest. Very heroic, in truth, are some of the thoughts and doings of those imaginary men and women ; for through all the wanderings of Arlette's fancy there runs, like a golden thread, a line of pure and lofty feeling. Childish and incongruous as the forms in which it is expressed may sometimes be, still the idea is never absent that there is a good and merciful Saviour waiting to be gracious to all that come to him ; that the world knows him not, and is perishing for lack of this knowledge, which those who possess must seek to impart, at the risk or even at the loss of life itself.

Suddenly recalled from her imaginary

world to that of reality (though the one was to her nearly as unreal as the other), Arlette threw the flowers from her lap and rushed to the door. Two men, with dark serge robes and sandals, stood outside in the drenching rain. She admitted them at once, though with a look of disappointment, soon followed by an eager question,—

“Where is my father?”

“He cometh anon, my little one,” answered the elder, kindly. “Stand aside, child, lest we make thee as wet as ourselves.”

“Ah, Father Heinz,” replied the little girl, “I would I might have kindled a fire ere your return; but I durst not.”

“Right, my child; it is not for such as thou to meddle with flint and fire.”

“Not so,” returned Arlette with a look of intelligence. “Oft have I kindled a fire; but my father said he feared the light might betray us.”

“True; Brother Robert is always prudent. He would not have us venture the fire.”

“Except in cases of necessity,” said his companion, who stood yet upon the threshold wringing out his drenched garments.

“Cold winter nights were worse than this. What we bore then we can bear now,” returned Heinz, betaking himself to the same employment, whilst Arlette hurried within to make what little preparations she could for their comfort.

“On such a night as this the flame could scarce be seen,” rejoined Wilhelm, the younger of the two; “and we know not of any special cause for alarm.”

Heinz shook his head. “Better to suffer wet and cold for a few hours, than to fall into the cruel hands of the townsfolk of Cologne.”

“Better neither,” said Wilhelm, who was still a young man, light-hearted, and sometimes rather imprudent.

“Wait at least for Robert and for Father Johan, and let us hear their minds,” said Heinz.

“Nay,” returned his companion; “let us do it at once, if it be to be done at all.”

Heinz was accustomed to permit Wilhelm to take the lead in trifling matters, so, after one more doubtful remonstrance, he allowed him to follow his own course, and the fire was soon blazing cheerily. If indeed there

was danger, it seemed but slight and distant, while the comfort was present and very real. It must be confessed that Wilhelm did not like discomfort; he would have borne torture and death without a murmur, rather than sacrifice one iota of what he believed to be the truth; but he felt keenly, and did not always so uncomplainingly endure, the lesser trials of his wandering life, the daily privations that had nothing in them sublime or heroic, and which, he sometimes forgot, were just as much ingredients in the cup appointed for him as the dungeon or the stake. Are there not many like him amongst ourselves?"

They had not stood long drying their garments at the fire, and talking over their missionary work in the streets and alleys of the great town and the more secluded hamlets around, when the watchful Arlette sprang once more to the door, and joyfully admitted her father with the aged Johan, the missionary who had been the means of his conversion at Ghent, and who was in fact the patriarch of the little band. Quick to observe the changes of the face she so loved, the little girl thought her father looked

unusually grave and sad. He kissed her affectionately, but was very silent, scarcely speaking until their frugal supper was over, and they were all seated beside the fire. Arlette was on his knee, Heinz sat nearest to him, and they soon began to converse in a low voice.

“Hast thou heard aught new to-day, brother?”

“No,” returned Robert, “save that the townsfolk say—.” It was not intended that Arlette should hear what the townsfolk said, for her father leaned over towards his companion and spoke in a whisper.

“Thinkest thou they have discovered our retreat?” A shade of alarm was visible in the speaker’s face.

“I do not,” said Robert quietly. “Yet it is possible.”

“We ought, then, to abandon it without delay, and to seek another place of refuge.”

“Such also is my mind; for should they continue their search as they appear to have begun it, I have little hope they can fail in tracking us hither. At least, we are not safe.”

“We are safe nowhere until the grave

receives us," replied Robert sadly. But his countenance brightened as he added, "Rather should I say that nowhere are we aught but safe, since our Father reigns in heaven, and the whole earth is his."

"True; but amidst our life of constant peril does thy heart never fail thee, Robert?"

"'Cast down' I have been sometimes, 'forsaken' never yet. And consider, friend, what comforts are given us, even in the midst of sorrow and disquietude. Consider the joy of bearing glad tidings to those who are pining in darkness and in the shadow of death. Brother, to-day my footsteps trod for the first time the threshold of a lowly dwelling, one of the meanest in yonder great city. I found there alone, lying on a couch of straw, in a room more bare of comforts than even *this*, a poor girl on whom Death seemed to have already laid his hand. I spoke to her with sympathy and compassion, pitied her loneliness, and asked if she had no friend to watch by her side. She said her sister tended her, but was obliged to spend the day in earning daily bread for both. So I knew there was time for me to speak and for her to listen, and I sat down

beside her. I talked first of her bodily disease, of her symptoms and her sufferings, that I might unlock her lips and win her confidence. Then we spoke of that other malady—the fatal sickness of the soul—and to my surprise and pleasure she understood me at once. God had shown her the great reality of *sin*; already he had taken her by the hand, and led her into the darkness after which the light cometh. But she was seeking rest in prayers, in penances, and in all the mummeries of Rome, and of course seeking it in vain. Thou knowest, too, that men are not invited to buy the good things of the Church’s providing ‘without money and without price;’ and with the awful fears of a soul conscious of unpardoned sin, and soon to stand in the presence of God, there mingled sordid calculations, mournful to hear, of how many *nails* could be wrung from their deep poverty to secure the good offices of the mass-priest. Silver and gold, in truth, I had not; but what I had I gave her. Yet not I—what was I but the cup, the ‘earthen vessel,’ in which God was pleased to convey the living water to her parched lips? I told her the Saviour par-

done freely, that the redemption of her soul indeed was precious, but that he had paid its price even to the last mite; and that therefore he could *give* remission of sins to those that came to him. Hope and joy lighted up her wasted features as she seemed to grasp the great truth that all was done for her. God willing, I shall see her again to-morrow, for if I guess right she has not many days to live."

He stopped rather abruptly, for the eager Wilhelm was detailing an interesting discussion he had held that day with an intelligent tradesman in the city, upon the virtue of relics and the use of pilgrimages. Whilst her father spoke, little Arlette drank in every word, and gave childhood's quick sympathy to the poor dying girl in Cologne; but she had not the same interest in Wilhelm's controversies, and soon her head pressed Robert's shoulder more heavily, and she sank into a sound and dreamless sleep.

God preserve each and all of the happy children in our homes from such a waking as hers was destined to be! Unwilling to be disturbed, she heard through her slumber confused noises around, and more than one

low whisper close to her ear. But she soon started into full and terrified consciousness. Strange men, with scowling faces and drawn swords, seemed to fill the room, and with a cry of terror she clung to her father for protection. The look with which he met her frightened gaze awed and silenced her; it brought her back in thought to the room where her dead mother had lain, and to her father's face as she had seen it then, full of an anguish unutterable, and to her incomprehensible. As in a dream she heard the rude voices of the soldiers, who poured in rapidly, and surrounded the little band of confessors.

"So we have stolen a march on you at last, heretics," said one of the foremost among them. "Ye did not expect a visit to-night, I trow, or ye would scarce have kindled yon fire to guide us."

She saw the unresisting Father Johan, his mild countenance calm as ever, seized and bound; she saw the impetuous Wilhelm almost throw himself amongst his captors, while with eager words he protested his readiness not to be bound only, but also to die for the word of God and the truth of

the gospel. She saw Heinz and her father standing side by side, with clasped hands, quietly awaiting the result ; and as she looked once more on her father's face, she saw—that *he* saw only hers.

Could they touch *him* ?

Then in a moment the thought flashed across her mind that *this was martyrdom*. Many and many a time had she listened to stirring tales of those who for the Saviour's sake had borne and had patience even to the suffering of death ; many and many a time did her young heart beat quick and fast, not with fear, but with kindling enthusiasm, as the thought arose, “And I, too, may be a martyr !” And now the hour was come. Jesus would be with her, she knew. He had promised it, and she believed his word. Her father, too, would be there ; she would hold his hand to the last. She had no terror, therefore—none save that these cruel men would let her live, would tear her away from him, and leave her alone in that desolate place. Yes ; one of them spoke in a low voice : “And this babe, what can she know of heresy ? We care not to slay children.”

“O sir, take me with my father!” cried Arlette.

Robert’s steadfast heart was wrung with anguish for her. He knew not which fate to dread most ; but it may have been he thought it best for her to accompany them to the city, and was not without a hope that her innocence might touch the hearts of their judges. So, held fast by him, she passed out into the darkness with the rest, after looking for one moment at the heap of withering flowers, for which an hour before she had cared so much. An hour was it ? or a year, or many years ? Or was it quite a different child, some little girl she had once known, but scarcely remembered now, who sat there in the barn playing with wild-flowers ? “I shall never play again,” she thought, “for I am going to Jesus.”

Then she was treading the long wet grass, the rain almost over, only now and then pleasantly touching her brow as if with a light cool finger. The way was dark as midnight could make it ; but she felt quite safe, for was she not holding her father’s hand ? It was all so strange, a wondrous dream, but on the whole a happy one. “I

am going to Jesus," still she thought; and although she felt vaguely that something very dreadful lay between—pain, death to be passed through, the river of death she had heard it called—she knew Jesus would bear her safely across, for was it not written, "He shall gather the lambs with his arm"? Her ideas of suffering and death were indistinct and unreal, and her mind soon turned from them to the happiness and the glory beyond.

And now they are treading narrow miry lanes. Arlette is growing weary, but cares little for that. Now they see lights gleaming through the darkness before them; they are drawing near the city. Robert stoops down and speaks a few words of soothing and comfort to his little girl; she likes to hear his voice, but has become too tired to answer. In a little while the lights are all around them, shining from many a casement in the high houses, and reflected back from the wet, uneven street. At last they pass beneath a broad dark archway; they climb a flight of steps, a door opens to receive them, then another door, which is closed and bolted as soon as they are admitted. They

may rest, and not too soon, at least for one of the party, who is scarcely conscious of anything now save sleep. She is in her father's arms; is gently laid by him she knows not and cares not where; and in hardly more than a minute, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, are all alike forgotten by her. No eyes save hers closed in slumber in that prison room.

Two or three days afterwards, a plot of waste ground just outside the gates of Cologne was the scene of an awfully impressive ceremonial. Thither the eager citizens crowded from every quarter of the town; some amongst them fierce and cruel, bigoted in their attachment to the Church, and rejoicing that the crime of heresy was that day to be purged with fire from their Catholic city; many without a distinct idea, simply wondering at all they saw; and many more—yes, they were many, though they were scattered here and there in obscure places, and not for the most part known even to one another—sympathized with the innocent sufferers: some, indeed, would have given their own lives to rescue them. In vain; the priests were then all-

powerful in Cologne, and they had their will.

Whatever the various sentiments of the dense crowd might be, there was a great silence as every eye turned to gaze on the victims, who were led bound towards the great pile which had been erected in the midst of the place. Their demeanour, fearless but perfectly quiet and gentle, preposessed the spectators in their favour, and "God help them!" "God have mercy on their souls!" was uttered aloud or breathed low by many voices.

"Waste not thy breath in prayers for yon heretic dogs," said a black monk to a woman near whom he stood; for, alas! there were many women in that crowd.

"Heretics or no," she answered stoutly, "they were good men and kind to the poor. My dying sister—"

"I would pity them as thou dost, good-wife," interrupted a man, "had they been condemned by the council and the clergy for rash words uttered unawares, and without a chance for their lives. But the priests say they have each and all been offered a free pardon if they would but forsake their

heresy; yet are they obstinate enough to prefer death of the body and the soul together, to leading Christian lives as good Catholics."

"Thou sayest truly, friend," rejoined the monk.—"But what of thy sister, woman?"

"One of those clerks hath visited her, and spoken such good words of God and our Saviour that her heart was comforted within her. I trow it was yonder tall, dark man with— Blessed saints! what have they the poor child among them for? They cannot—no, they surely cannot intend that *she* should die!"

For little fair-haired Arlette stood amongst those doomed men, pale and calm, in her place beside her father, her hand clasped in his. After all, it might be said that he endured the martyrdom for both; for the draught of life that she put aside so quietly she had scarcely yet had time to taste; and that other cup about to be borne to her young lips, how could she comprehend or imagine its bitterness? At most, it would be but a brief hour of anguish for her, perhaps not even that; for does not the Good Shepherd indeed sometimes carry the lambs in his arms,

so that their feet do not touch the waters of the dark river ?

And now the hour has come ; the pile is lit, and not one heart in the steadfast group gives way. But there is a point beyond which our common humanity will not endure to have its instincts outraged. In that crowd there are fathers, ay, and mothers too, in whose homes are loved and tender little ones like the martyr's child. They will not, they cannot, see her perish. An indignant murmur rises, nearer and nearer press the people, and at last strong arms seize the child just in time, and drag her from her place as the flames begin to spread among the fagots.

"She is safe !—thank God, she is safe !"

"Make the sign of the cross, poor child, and thank the saints for thy life."

"I cannot ! I cannot ! Let me go to my father !" wailed Arlette, while with all her little strength she struggled—struggled for death as others might have done for life.

"Where he dies, I must die also. Let me go ! I cannot give up the faith !" and an exceeding bitter cry accompanied the words.

"Back, back, good people ! ye come too

near the pile!" shouted two or three of the officials, who were probably not unwilling to connive at the child's escape.

But in the recoil that followed this order some confusion naturally occurred; and the man who held Arlette, being rudely pushed by a neighbour, raised his hand to strike him. One moment's freedom for the child, and it is enough. With marvellous quickness she has seized it; she reaches the burning pile, she clasps her father's hand once more—yet once more—and now like a shroud the flames wrap them around. A few minutes and all is over.

So little Arlette won the victory; and so those five faithful martyrs of Jesus Christ passed that day,—

“ From the desolate distress
Of this world's great weariness;
From its withering and its blight,
From the shadow of its night,
Into God's pure sunshine bright.”

No fancy sketch is this; there has floated down to us on the stream of history, like a withered wild-flower from a distant land, not the name, indeed, but the true story of the child who died for Christ's sake at Cologne,

seven hundred years ago, "not accepting deliverance," because of that better and heavenly country towards which her steps were bent. There is no rank, no age, no grade or type of character, from the prince to the peasant, from the old man to the lisping babe, from the mighty philosopher to the least and meanest of our kind, from which the Saviour of man, when he makes up his jewels, will not take some radiant gems to sparkle in his diadem, and to which he cannot impart, as he pleases, grace and strength to do or to suffer great things for his name's sake.

THE END.

